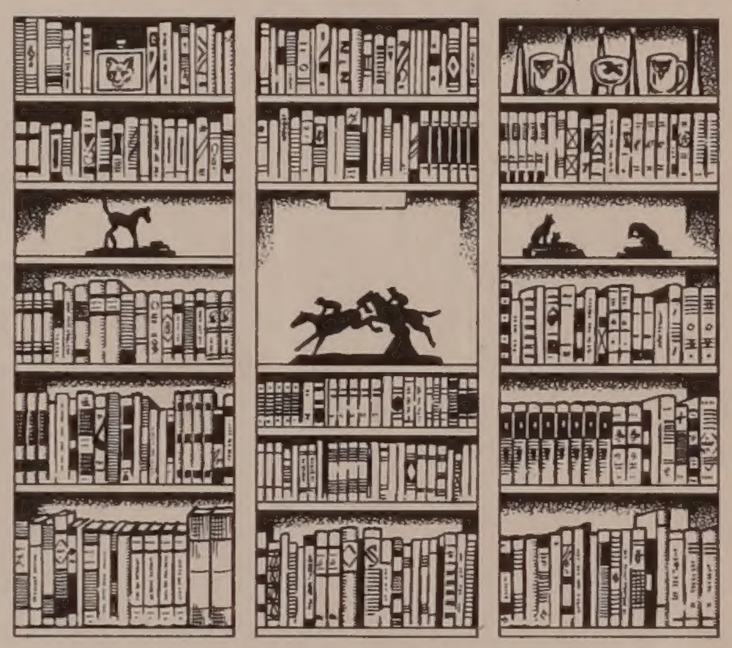

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JOHN AND MARTHA DANIELS

MANNERS AND MANNERISMS

MANNERS
and
MANNERISMS
by
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DEDICATED, with profound admiration, TO ALL THOSE WHO ARE THE BACKBONE OF HUNTING IN ENGLAND; BUT PARTICULARLY (and with even profounder admiration) TO THOSE WHO CAN'T AFFORD TO HUNT—AND DO.

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I

MANNERS AND MANNERISMS

"IT is not so much their manners," a man has said to me, speaking, and even spluttering, of those who hunt the Fox, "—not so much their manners as their mannerisms." Now that was a great relief to me: I had supposed that he was about to say that it was not so much their manners as their lack of manners. *That* is a thing often said and —to-day—unfairly and untruly said. A few seasons ago to say that people in the hunting field were bad-mannered was the sort of libel which the lawyers call "fair comment on a matter of public interest." That is to say, it might safely be said. It might then safely be said that no one should venture into the hunting field who minded being spoken to like a bargee or treated like a barge—pushed and bunted about at every gate and fence. But to-day a tidal wave of bad manners which began to flood the whole country some few years back has left the hunting field high and dry. There are exceptions enough for interest and example and to prove the rules; but, speaking generally, one would say that any Master of Hounds would tell you that his Field is vastly better-mannered—because more knowledgeable—than that same Field was, say, three seasons ago. The blemish of bad manners and off-hand ways has left its curious mark on an easily recognised part of what we may call the Younger Rich: but even that part of the Younger Rich behaves itself, in the hunting field, in peaceful-boorish fashion. *That* part reserves all actively boorish manners for Hunt Balls and places where they dance or dine, and where the young are often too rich or the rich are sometimes too young.

And if the manners of Foxhunting people are pretty good, does it

matter if their mannerisms are rather irritating—to the outsider? As to manners, one must agree that Madame de Maintenon said a mouthful —that Madame de Maintenon was *right* when she declared that "For manners, tranquillity is the essential requirement." It is the ignorance of outside people which makes them suppose that Foxhunters are less tranquil than others. Is it ignorance combined with a pardonable measure of jealousy which makes the outside person object to a Hunting mannerism? When your spluttering friend, or mine, says that "it's not so much their manners as their mannerisms," what does he really *mean*, beyond the fact that he is feeling cross? With the help of a fairly good Dictionary I think he means that Foxhunting people have "an affected addiction to particular methods, habits, and fashions." They can't repress a shudder when an outside person calls a hunting whip a crop.

Yes. It is *that* sort of thing—I am sure—which is at the back of the splutters of my friend. And in so far as an outside person wishes to become an inside Foxhunter, I have every sympathy with my friend, his splutters. The outside person splutters, but he also blushes—and why should a person be kept blushing outside because he has made an incorrect noise about a piece of hunting equipment?

That is the outside person's question, and, as a matter of fact, there are good and sufficient answers to that question. It is necessary that we should be able to make the right noises before we come inside. But what, in the case of this crop, the outside person (most fortunately) fails to appreciate is that, in calling it a crop, he *has* made the right noise. The thing is no longer a whip. In the old days it was a whip: you may see pictures of Foxhunters, in the old days, arriving at "the Appointment" and brandishing a thing made like an insufficient young fishing-rod. The most scholarly of modern Foxhunters will, in a slangy, regrettable way, refer to the Appointment as a "Meet"—to-day: then, why shouldn't he call a whip a crop? The Meet *is* the same as the old Appointment (except for those exhaust-fuming motor-cars)—but the

whip is no longer a whip. It is a whip-cut-short—a whip *cropped* short—a short ſtick with a loop at one end, and not a riding *whip* at all. It is fortunate that the outside person does fail to appreciate that fact, or he might splutter himself irreparably.

This little whip-crop trouble possibly springs from a bad mannerism of Foxhunters. Possibly—but not certainly. There is a virtue in very old words—something of a tranquil sort which exiſts in some very old people. It may, on balance, be right that Foxhunters should wrongly call a hunting crop a riding whip: it is perhaps more nearly right where they don't have to shudder at people who call it a crop. On this, at leaſt, we shall all be agreed: in so far as Hunting mannerisms are employed to keep outside the people who want to come in, to that extent a mannerism is very bad manners.

But there remain all the *good* mannerisms of Foxhunting—all the little ways which people adopt in the hunting field, making some of them their individual own. It is not much use for an outsider to come into a hunting field unless he is prepared to reſpect some of those good mannerisms. At the beſt he will in that case miss a lot of fun, and at the worſt he will be a curmudgeon.

The little "riding" mannerisms are the ones which will firſt leap to the hunting mind when we hear the splutterers taking irritable exception to hunting people's mannerisms generally. There is the fierce way in which one man will ride at all fences, great or small, as if he dared them to remain fences blocking his line of flight for one moment longer. There is that curious encouragement-noise, with which another man will invoke his horse, with shouts—doing his unrealised beſt to throw that horse out of his ſtride in the laſt, moſt important, ſtrides of all. There are even the people who, in spite of all that has been written by the professors of Seat and Balance, will continue, with hand held high, to "call a cab" as they fly a fence; or they will twiſt in the saddle, on the downward swoop, as if anxious to assure themselves

that this colossal fence they have jumped really *is* as colossal as it seemed when it was still fifty yards ahead. With others you may have noticed a habit of riding at every fence with a cheerful but slightly glassy grin —as who should say, "How delightful (we must all hope) this is going to be." Still others will go to the further extreme, riding at all fences in a care-free, casual way. In view of the whacking size of some of the fences which they jump in this casual fashion, that way of riding at them would be an affectation, but for two things—that they generally finish by jumping rather more and bigger fences than anybody else, and that *everything* they do is done in this same casual, care-free way. With others that riding-mannerism is but the trick of a moment, a sort of "touch-wood," evil-averting dab at the hat in the second before the final take-off; or a quick, double thump on the thigh with the butt end of a hunting crop—as it were, a last-second pressing of the button to order self and horse to jump.

Their little mannerisms of *dress* may also become a part of individual members of a Hunt. For this, it is true, there is not much scope given to any self-respecting person; but in the pattern of a spur, or the colour of gloves or a handkerchief, there is something which men or women can make their own until half the other members of the Hunt (and all the shops) begin to copy it from them. Very often what we suppose to be a mannerism of dress will really be a Christmas Present: I mean, that a man may not really at all want to blow his nose with that enormous sheet of yellow silk covered with bright green swastikas; but if you've had two dozen of them for Christmas, you can't wear them *all* in Church. For the rest, the more extravagant mannerisms of dress are rightly discouraged and not generally associated with the people who may be said to be "missed," if or when they no longer come out hunting. Yet, for those of us who cannot really afford proper hunting clothes, I look forward to the day when—as at a dance—Fancy Dress will be optional. There must, of course, be no buffoonery

about it: the Fancy Dress will have at leaſt to be (fancy) riding dress. But to have a fair proportion of the field *correctly* dressed as Sheikhs and Sheikhesses could only add to the pageantry of the thing—while reducing the coſt, for them, to that of sandals and plenty of cheese-cloth. On the other hand a Top, or at leaſt a *hard*, Hat will ſtill be necessary. And, with the beſt intentions in the world, it will, I suppose, require a ſtrong character or a suitable profile to eliminate all suggeſtion of buffoonery from a hunting-hatted Sheikh.

In Capping, the manners and the mannerisms of the capper are things almoſt forced upon the notice of the capped. Here the capper can certainly not complain that his art gives him insufficient scope. A capper may range over all that wide field of money-collection and its methods, and the opportunities are as wide in the Hunting as in any other field. To do them juſtice, cappers as a whole seem fully alive to this: from a somewhat Highwayman attitude to "Sir, we beg to remind you"—there can scarcely now be any collector-part which remains unexplored by the capper. If moſt of us prefer the beg-to-remind-you touch, that muſt not blind us to the fact that an almoſt painful degree of tact would be necessary in the ideal capper—and one allied to ſtrong determination and real courage.

But, from the finding to the handling (and particularly the *heading*) of a fox, there are more little ways of a hunting field than can be set out here and now. There are little ways of individual huntsmen—which are the private property of every Hunt and rightly treasured by them. There are others, the memory of which becomes the common property of all people who hunt. As to *those* ways, I recollect two young soldiers, in war-time, who beguiled a period of battle-waiting by saying, each in turn, the firſt half of some line of poetry, prose, or recorded conversation which had made an appeal to *him*. The other young soldier completed the line—if he could. Ranging over a widish field not confined to sport, they had had but a moderate success in

this two-minds-with-but-a-single-thought game when suddenly their two hearts beat as one. For one young soldier suddenly said:

"'*The late Sir Charles Slingsby*——'"

And the other young soldier immediately answered:

"'*—used to sound the high "G" when going away*'":

And then both together bellowed:

"'*which was the* MOST THRILLING SOUND THE WRITER EVER HEARD.'"

Yes—from the finding to the handling of a fox: but that *heading* of a fox is a more serious—indeed, a dreadful thing. Yet, have we not all at some time seen the man who is always so insistent in telling everybody else not to head the fox—end by heading the fox himself? May we not say that if this, when seen, is not a matter for expressed delight, there is at least a certain satisfaction about it? We may.

II

"HOW MUCH HAVE YOU GOT?"

HOW infuriating is the vagueness—the unnecessary, the mischievous, the *unhelpful* vagueness—of replies which are given to queries as to the cost of a season's Hunting. A recent enquiry was made by a young Soldier about to return Home on leave, and one could only suppose that, having read the reply, he asked leave not to return home. At any rate, it is a pity (and will mean loss of time to him) if that young Soldier has returned home without getting some sense out of somebody.

The thing is infuriating. If a man can never (comfortably) say Yes or No to the old enquiry as to whether he has given up bashing his wife, yet, surely the experts could answer, within five or fifty pounds, this "what's-the-cost" enquiry? The fact is that there is a vagueness about the Rich. It is, I suspect, that Vagueness which, more than anything else, has driven us Poor to occasional execration of those Rich:

It's the Rich who gets the plesh-u-er,
It's the Poor what takes the blame.

In all my bath-room repertoire there is, I think, no chorus which I will moan to you more feelingly than I will moan *that* chorus—remembering my rich friend who airily declares that, in actual total, the more he earns the less taxation leaves him; not forgetting my even richer friend, who doesn't know to within a thousand a year the cost of his gardeners' wages. But perhaps that was the trouble—perhaps this Soldier-coming-on-leave made Hunting enquiry of *too* rich a man (for we must not suppose that he made enquiry of one insufficiently informed). It is a fact that the Very Rich are maddeningly ignorant of

possibilities and impossibilities, as they apply to those of us who count the pence—or any pence we may happen to have at the moment. But it is also a fact that the Rich wouldn't stay rich for long if they spent as much time pence-counting as do we. Then, if Soldier-coming-on-leave had sent for information to a rather less rich friend—would he have got better satisfaction?

I think that he would. But before starting to be a little vague ourselves, let us remark that Soldier-coming-on-leave was not, himself, the very mirror of exactitude. Was this soldier coming Home or was he coming home? The difference between big H and little h is neither to be despised nor ignored in a world where even the british empire itself might seem a smaller thing if spelt, like that, with little letters. If the Soldier is merely coming Home—if it doesn't matter to him two hoots where in all England he does his hunting, or what he is doing when he is not out hunting—then the problem is of one sort. But if the Soldier, by dispensation of Providence and the struggles of his Parents, still has a home in England to which to return—then, being properly brought up, he may be content to hunt from that home in however vile a (hunting) country it may chance to be set. And the problem becomes of an easier sort.

Let us, however, face the problem as set by the Soldier and without any more help from the Soldier—if you can call what he has given us any help at all. For, in partial extenuation of that rich "*Reply to Soldier-coming-on-leave*," we must admit that Soldier, himself, has been pretty vague. If what the Soldier said can never be evidence, what *this* Soldier has left unsaid would have given clues enough to have solved his whole problem to within a fiver. In revenge, and in our not unjustifiable annoyance, let us perpetrate, and explode at this Soldier, one final, all-crashing Vagueness. Let us tell him that the cost of a season's hunting will vary between twenty-five pounds and twenty-five thousand pounds—according to the type of fun you want and can pay

for. That it will be rather rough fun for twenty-five pounds, and pretty luxurious for twenty-five thousand—but that the bill can be made out for either amount.

And if he wants a bill somewhere between the two? Why, I do not think that *that* should defeat us. But since the Soldier, himself, has really not been very helpful, let us go beyond his particular case: let us make out a bill for Everyman—a bill which every other man can pick to pieces if he chooses. But let us make the bill of pieces which every man can afterwards put together to his own satisfaction—taking only the pieces which suit him, adding any others necessary to his particular case. We will make only one stipulation as to this Bill for a Single Season's Hunting. It shall be the bill of a man who

(*a*) has never hunted in his life before, or

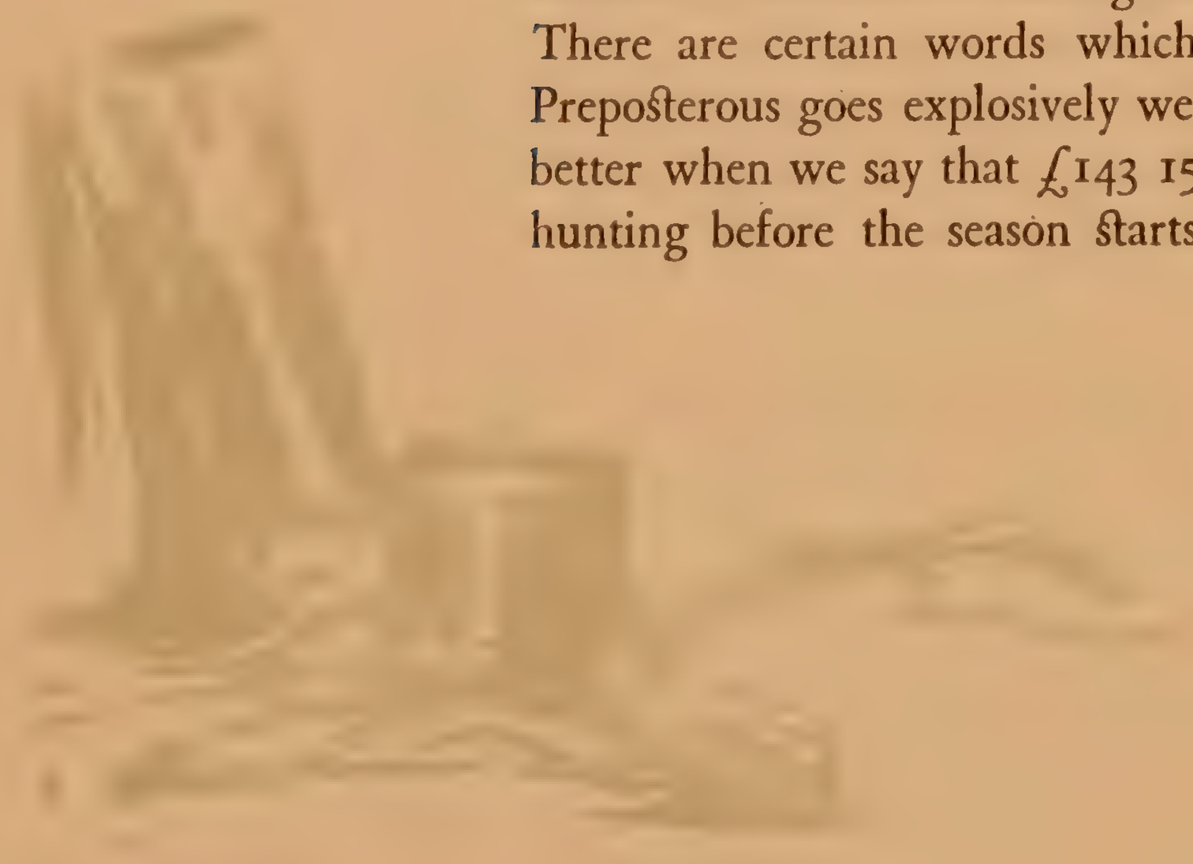
(*b*) has not hunted for the past half-dozen Seasons.

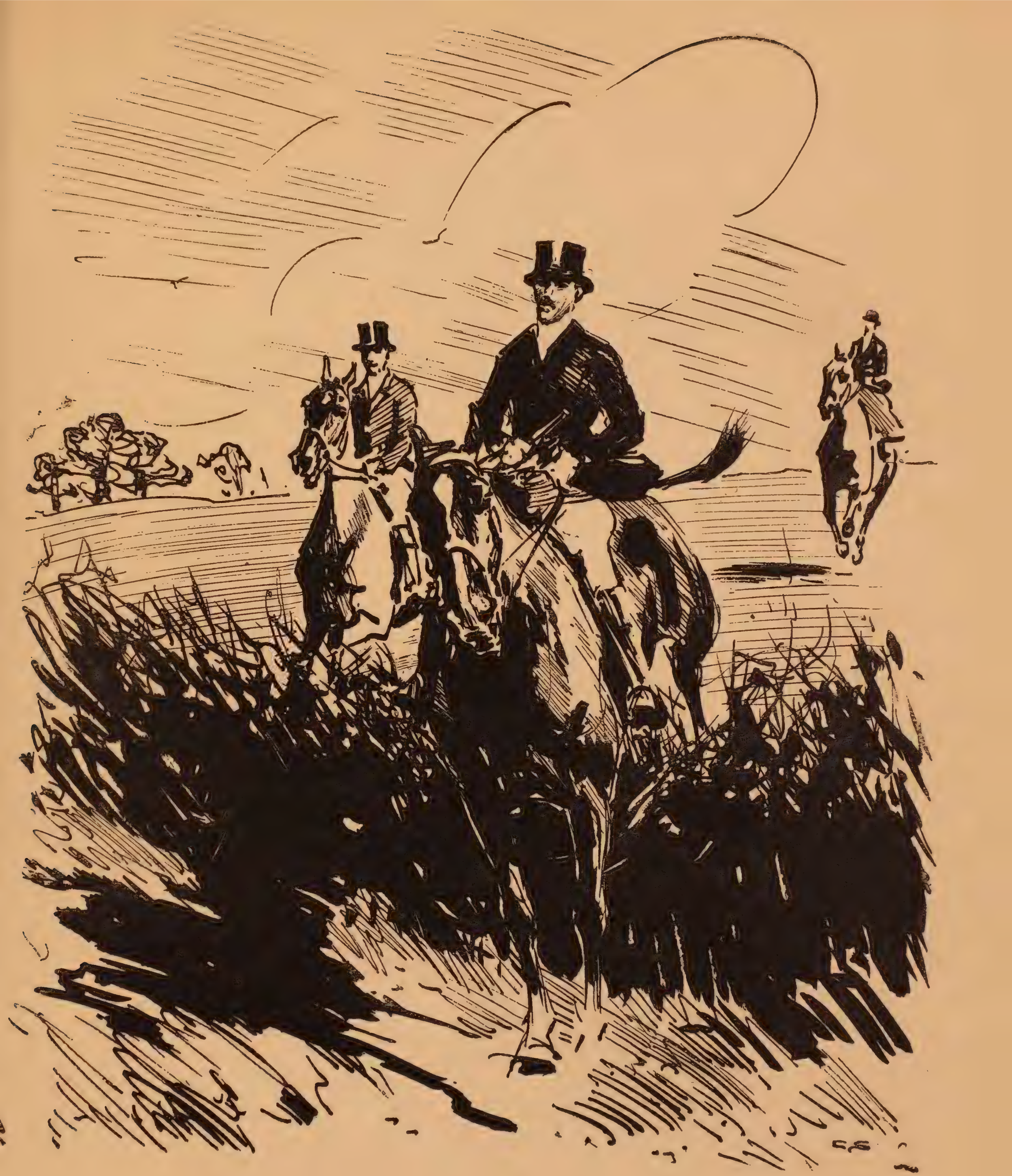
You will see the point of (*b*) in a moment—for you will see that if *A*, coming new to Hunting, has to come in new clothes—poor *B*, when he comes to look at them, may find that moth, if not rust, has corrupted most of his old ones.

Now, will you please to shut your eyes and tell me, tapping stiffly with your fingers, doing those horrible "sums in your head"—what Hunting will cost a man (who has no clothes and no recent experience) *before he ever comes out hunting at all*?

But you are quite wrong. It will cost him £143 15s. 6d.

And that's a lot of money. It is so much money that all of us who have the best interests of the sport at heart will get, I think, a little reddish in the face on reading this preposterous figure of £143 15s. 6d. There are certain words which go with certain other words, and Preposterous goes explosively well with "this figure." It will go even better when we say that £143 15s. 6d.—as the cost price of a season's hunting before the season starts—allows nothing whatever to *A* or





to *B* for horses or for saddlery, for wages or for keep. It is a figure of coſt before the season ſtarts. Soon you will be able to pick holes in that figure. You will be able to tell me that a man doesn't pay twelve guineas for a pair of hunting boots juſt for the sake of wearing them for one season. Those twelve guineas (and more), you will say, are in the nature of Capital Expenditure. But I will tell *you* that a man doesn't pay three guineas for a hunting *hat*—juſt to have it bashed in at the firſt fence of the season. But he gets it bashed in, juſt the same. As a matter of fact, a man doesn't really pay three guineas for a hunting hat at all—he pays £2 17s. 6d. (with cord): but if you are going to talk grandly about Capital Expenditure, I shall talk grandly, too. And if *B*'s boots are capital, surely you will admit that his hat may go (as they say) phut, as completely as any other Capital? We muſt have a little give-and-take in the matter of this minimum-expenditure problem. For myself I can take nothing from an assertion that £143 15s. 6d. is the figure for poor AB.

That is—as near as makes no matter—the minimum sum of money which every Ordinary Subscriber will have to pay, in order to pave his golden way to Foxhunting in our time. As to details of that £143 15s. 6d.—a dreadful total, now branded on our minds—we have talked of hats and boots and shall have a good deal more to say about them before we have done. But let us firſt, and more virtuously, settle this queſtion of the Hunt Subscription. Now, it is a deplorable, if a partly underſtandable, fact that quite a lot of people grudge paying as much for their Hunt Subscription as they pay for their hats and boots. "Grudge" is, I think, the right word—but if it is also a rather hard word, let us say that some of us have the feeling that, in our case, the Hunt will get along quite happily with *rather less* than the full amount of fixed subscription. And so the Hunt generally will—if we can make out our case. In no other activity are people so ready to make cash allowances for those of us who have not much cash. Hunt Committees

—or their Secretaries acting partly with a Committee's (somewhat gloomy) approval—will exercise a large and benevolent discretion in such matters. That is greatly to the good. If So-and-So is a busy man who can only hunt a dozen times in a season; if Somebody Else is a young man home for a holiday; if Still Another is a struggling land and covert owner, with one horse and no money—then it is to the ultimate benefit and immediate honour of Foxhunting that they should all pay something less than the full subscription, if the Hunt can somehow afford it. If there remain the So-and-Sos, Somebody Elses, and Still Others, who are equally poor and yet do manage to produce the full subscription—well, that is to the immediate benefit and ultimate honour of Foxhunting. Only when there are people who, hunting regularly or owning more than one horse, do yet pay something less than the proper subscription—only then is there no immediate benefit nor ultimate honour done. And, of course, the irritating thing for a Hunt Committee must be that in *those* cases they are hardly ever asked to make allowances. That sort of subscriber makes the allowance for himself, chopping off the guineas with his cheque.

The fact of the matter is that at least one question should be put to those about to hunt, when they ask you, "How much will it cost me?" "How much have you *got*?" a man should demand of them: "How much money, impudence, and ambition?" On the sum total of those, or on their various proportions, a great deal will depend.

But this (as you say) is all very vague. And if you and I are to share something with the Rich (who get the Pleasure) it will be a pretty poor show if we are only to catch something of their Vagueness. Then I will once more and stoutly assert that the cost of a Season's hunting *before that Season starts*—is £143 15s. 6d. And in another chapter, if not in the next chapter, I will prove it to you.

III

FINDING A LEVEL

WHAT hunting country is the best hunting country in the world? If a man—newly arrived in England—were to put that problem to you, what, I wonder, would you answer him? To what hunting country would you recommend him to betake himself to get the best hunting in the world? It depends a good deal on the man. If he were not a very nice man you could to-day, of course, and with a fairly clear conscience, recommend him to turn round at once and betake himself out of England. Apart from our own Dominions, there is Foxhunting of the highest order to be found, for example, in the United States to-day. It is not, apparently, easily to be found. "There is no country in America," says one of the greatest American authorities on Foxhunting, "no country which can compare favourably with the average British hunt country." In saying that he speaks with modesty—and is taking into account, no doubt, all the tradition-born habits, conditions and circumstances which go to the making of an "average" British hunt. But with Mr. Thomas' Foxhounds, with the Millbrook, with your choice of all the packs of America, surely you could find one or more to which to send an anxious Enquirer? And there is at least one sense in which America itself is, beyond all reasonable doubt, the greatest hunting country of the world. "A million and a half"—that is the figure at which *Dog World* of America puts the total number of their hounds. True, these hounds are said to be hounds "of all sorts." But they are hounds, not mere dogs. "Thousands of hounds" hunting mountain lion, bear, and deer. "Tens of thousands" of beagles and "rabbit dogs." A

"legion" of Coon Dogs. And at the head of the list, "several hundred thousand hounds hunting foxes and wolves in all parts of the United States." Surely, if your enquiring friend gets very tiresome with his questions, they should have room for him in America—if only with the Coon Dogs.

If he is to stay in England, then his question as to the best hunting country may seem at first not so easy to answer. It *is* easy to answer (as you shall see): but it may not seem so at first. The answer depends a great deal upon the man himself, you will think—and on his circumstances. You, in your intelligent way, will want a reply to a lot of your own questions before you will give him an answer to *his* question. You will wish to be told his capital, his income, his degree of keenness and horsemanship, his experience (if any), and a hundred other things.

I do not know that you will be altogether right in wanting to be told all that. In every hunting country, whether in the Shires or the Provinces, there are men who get a vast deal of fun out of hunting when by all the rules and by the small extent of their stud, their experience, or their cash, they ought to get hardly any fun at all. That is understandable in the hunting Provinces—where, if the Sport often reaches a very high standard of excellence, only a small proportion of the field is itself quite up to those standards. It is understandable that, in the Provinces, a man or a woman with only one horse and of small proficiency in horsemanship should easily find hunting companionship among men and women of similar limitations. But as to the Shires, an Enquirer (who rightly supposes that Foxhunting in the Shires calls for a super-excellence of horses and horsemanship) will also suppose that no man or woman can have fun hunting in the Shires unless he or she has, and can ride, five hundred guinea horses. And there the Enquirer will be quite wrong. It is one of the soundnesses of Foxhunting that in every Shire, of all the great ones, there

are men riding twenty-pound horses and getting lots of fun. To the stranger few things are more surprising (and comforting) than to find that the followers of hunting in the Shires divide themselves up in much the same way as does the field of any provincial hunt. Almost any provincial hunt, in the cream of its country, will have "going" as sound and fences as big as those of the cream of Leicestershire. Fewer of those fences and less of that going—but some of both. And in Leicestershire the field takes those fences in much the same way as we take them in the provinces. Those of us who have never seen High Leicestershire suppose it to be an immense area of almost dead flat country strongly, but not staggeringly, fenced with stake-and-bind fences. We suppose wrongly (though there is not time to go into all that now), but we suppose most wrongly of all in thinking that the whole of a Leicestershire "field" jumps every fence with the followers riding in line, at a speed of some thirty miles an hour. The thrill of Leicestershire hunting is the thrill of seeing a very fair proportion of a very large field taking fences at speed, as they come. But a *comforting* thing about Leicestershire hunting is to find that when that "fair proportion" has swept out of sight and hearing, there remains a more pottering contingent—such as we have in our Provinces. And yet a Potterer (by his association, however distant, with what we may call a Shires Flying Squad) must surely share in High Leicestershire the thrill of that association. Even if he thinks him quite incapable of riding with a Flying Squadron, it would be a rash man who would advise an Enquirer, however inexperienced, not to go to Leicestershire for his fun.

But the fun problem is not the only one you will have to consider in making recommendation to an Enquirer. Except for the man who is only in England to hunt for the one season, the question of where he is likely to get most galloping and biggest jumping is not, by a long chalk, the most important question for decision. Is that (other) man

likely to take root in the country of your choice for him?—*that* is the question which you must decide before advising him.

It will be very difficult to answer that question to your own satisfaction. To decide whether an Enquirer is likely to find in this hunting country or in that hunting country men and women of his own way of living and thinking and outlook—all that is comparatively easy to decide. You can give your Enquirer the companionship he needs without any great trouble of decision. But how are you to decide upon the *country* that he needs—for the peace of his soul and the refinement of his perceptions? There is the problem. For the plain fact is that the best hunting country in the world, for man or woman, is that country which, when they come or return to it, a man or a woman may know at once for their own. Hills and the sea, or the woodlands; the moors and the mountains or the grasslands; all these make their several appeal to the soul of a man or a woman. But, slide about the country as he may, in his luxurious motor-car—or bucket around, as most of us have to, in something between a sardine-tin and a boot-box on wheels—no man can make more than a few square miles of country into his very own. A man must say for himself where it is that he wants to live; and when he has told you that, you can tell him where he should hunt.

This hunting is only a part of our country lives; but it is also a part of the lives of those of our countryside who never get a day's hunting at all. It is enough for those latter—or they themselves think it so—if the people who come out hunting (or a good proportion of them) are people whom they themselves know in other activities of our countryside. If the followers of a Hunt are almost entirely composed of people who just come to that country for the hunting, then it is not "enough." Such folk will pay well for their hunting, but having no touch with or responsibility in that countryside, they are apt to ignore the countrymen whose countryside it is, and to treat them

with no consideration. It may be a good thing that your hunting-boxes-for-hire should be adequately filled each season with satisfactorily wealthy tenants. It may be a good thing that those tenants should emerge in their hundreds to ride about the countryside during the hunting season, and be no more seen for the rest of the year. It may not be altogether a bad thing if, to a sober countryside, some few of those wealthy tenants seem to spend most of their nights in a state of riotous and convivial intoxication—visiting the Hunting Boxes of other wealthy tenants, and being shovelled back into their own boxes by their chauffeurs in the early hours of the morning. That will be bad for the tenants (and not at all good for the chauffeurs), but for the countryside it may only be a reminder of roystering and drunken days, once common in our countryside among the dwellers therein—but now to be lived only by irresponsible folk of a visiting sort.

To be a roysterer and given to riotous living is not, of course, an indispensable qualification for the hunting visitor or tenant. Your sober-minded hunting Enquirer, when once he has taken root in a country of his own, may yet, without alarm and with advantage, dig himself up periodically to visit other countries. If those other countries are countries of the Shires, your Enquirer will find there a type of hunting man very valuable to hunting to-day—the landowner who, being a leading supporter of his own provincial pack, can yet make time for lightning dashes into Leicestershire. But this you must impress upon your Enquirer who means to make Foxhunting a part of his life: you must impress upon him that at some time or other, and the sooner the better, he himself must take root in a countryside and make the life of that countryside a part of his Foxhunting.

He will be glad to do it. You will remember that (cavalry) soldier who—being a somewhat undesirable character with several sides to his undesirability—was removed from regiment to regiment upon a variety of grounds and excuses. Grounds and excuses, taxing the

ingenuity of successive commanding officers to burſting-point, had manifeſtly become exhauſted by the time he arrived with, let us say, the Fiftieth Regiment of Horse. Throughout mess on the evening of arrival, the Fiftieth eyed him with an unrelieved gloom. After mess their gloom began gradually to give place to a sort of semi-cheerful resignation to the inevitable. Is it the case, someone asked him, that you were, for a year, with the Fortieth? And in India with the Forty-firſt? And, later on, the Forty-second? And after that with the Forty-third? And quite recently in the For—— "Gentlemen," said this horrible man at laſt, "it is true that I had to leave the Fortieth. It is true that I wasn't good enough for the Forty-firſt, that they didn't like my manners in the Forty-second and wouldn't have me in the Forty-third. It is true that every decent regiment with which I've been, so far, has been unable to ſtick me. And now I've come here." He shifted in his chair and looked at them in turn, and "My God," he said, "*I think I've found my level at laſt.*"

Let a hunting Enquirer find his level—and having found it, there take root. The tree gives and takes, in the soil and the air of a country-side. A hunting man who thinks he is only taking may find that he is giving too—in the Best Hunting Country in the world; which is any country that a man, in his heart, may call and know for his own. And when a man comes at laſt to his own country he shall learn to share the love of it with the men of that countryside.

IV

MISCOUNTING THE COST

I FEAR that we must return to counting the cost. To the Outsider who has a mild (but so admirable) prompting towards a hunting of the Fox, few things are more irritating than the apparent reluctance of Foxhunters to give a man exact information. The reluctance is only "apparent." In nine cases out of ten either the Foxhunter has not got the information himself (and gets along quite happily without it)—or else he honestly believes that such things are to be learned only in the hunting field, and not in any other place or from any other person at all. Certainly not from himself. But to an Earnest Enquirer the thing is exasperating. The Earnest Enquirer is convinced that his foxhunting friend is trying to make a mystery where none exists. He will even believe that Foxhunters try to set up barriers of mystery and mannerism—unclimbable fences, forbidding enough to prevent too many people from climbing into the hunting field, substantial enough to make it impossible for outsiders to see for themselves that nothing so very mysterious is going on inside.

Hunting "shop" is boring to those who keep another kind of shop. But that is true of all shop. From the Lawyer who talks about his laws to the Grocer who burbles of his gross, there is no shopman incapable of boring an outsider to screaming point. But when an outsider *wants* to know about gross and nett, about tare or nolle prosequi, about mandamus, chiaroscuro, or the influence of laissez-faire on Rationalisation—why, then, it certainly is maddening if mere tricks of the trade are treated as being something over our heads.

But, in Foxhunting, Tricks of the Trade will come later. Much later. If in foxhunting there *are* any tricks of the trade, if (and I only and nervously say *if*) there sometimes seem to be curious reasons

why a huntsman has successfully handled his fox; or if a Master will occasionally—— But we are going too (dangerously) far. It is not with the subtleties that an outsider is immediately concerned. His worries are simpler worries than these. And in the present and imperfect state of our civilisation his first, all-pervading, worry must be to discover the cost of it all.

The cost of it all to *him*. Soon he will be able to take an intelligent, if somewhat over-detached interest in the cost of hunting to his Hunt. But the first thought of a man who is coming to hunt the Fox for the first time in his life, or of a man who is coming *back* to hunt the Fox after a longish interval in his life—must always be *that* thought, "What will it cost ME?"

And no one can tell him. *He* thinks that this is because everybody else is so rich that they never bother to add up their bills, or so afraid of giving away tricks of the trade that they won't add up their bills for *him*. And I wouldn't say that he is always wrong: but I would say that it is a bigger job than the outsider supposes, to set down and add up all the items.

But let us make the big job a quick one. Let us repeat that it will cost a man nearly one hundred and fifty pounds before he can even *start* on that first hunting season which he contemplates. And let us then stand back and await the howl of execration which will—very properly—be raised by all who have the best interests of the sport at heart. It *is* monstrous that so large an expenditure should be necessary, but it will be necessary—to a man who intends to pay his subscription and to wear a black coat and a hunting hat and the things which go with them. In saying this we must suppose that he has, already, not any of the things he will require—and that he has none of the hunting experience which would enable him to buy (some of) those things more cheaply than we shall sell them to him. As to those things, we will leave the poor fellow his underclothes and socks (but

I fear that, as you will see, we must have the shirt off his back), and then we will clothe him as cheaply as he will let us.

But first we must leave him standing in those underclothes and socks, while we settle the question of his Hunt Subscription. I have put his Hunt Subscription at £25. If you tell me that this is too much I will ask you to tot up the total of Poultry fund, Wire fund, Damage, and any-other-fund contributions—and to add them to that lower Hunt Subscription which you yourself would have proposed for this poor fellow now hopping around in his socks. If, even then, you do not reach so high a figure as £25—will you please to add something for "Hunt Servants' Benevolent Society" *and* for Christmas presents. As to *that,* Christmas still comes once a year to Hunt Servants, but it is really deplorable (or so I understand) how seldom nowadays the Christmas presents come to them.

But perhaps you think that, on the contrary, I have let the Sock Hopper off too lightly with £25? Let us give him his choice: let us lovingly take our *Baily* and read to him as he hops. "The Pytchley minimum subscription is £35," we may read to him, turning over the pages at random. "The Woodland Pytchley, £20. The Quorn—nothing said about it, but the Secretary's address is given and you could write to him. Eskdaile and Ennerdale (1927), 'all subscriptions accepted. These vary from £3 3s. od. to one shilling.' Taunton Vale, £10 10s. od. and £1 11s. 6d. per horse." With some such random reading did I myself, upon a day, attempt to inform my friend Mr. Sebastian Hoote. Mr. Hoote, if ignorant enough of hunting matters to ask for my information upon them, was enough of a business man to pick holes in my information when he got it. Mr. Hoote said it all appeared to be very vague. The Eskdaile and Ennerdale at a shilling seemed to be the lowest subscription so far; but a man couldn't even be sure of *that,* he pointed out, until he had heard from the Secretary of the Quorn.

But my Mr. Hoote needs a book to himself—or, at any rate, he will get one if he doesn't take care. So far as that other Man-in-his-Socks is concerned, he can take it from us and *Baily* that, while he can pay more than £25 Subscription if he wants to, that sum will see him through in most parts of the country—and in most parts of the country he will end by paying that sum.

We have threatened him with £143 15s. 6d. to pay, and up to now we have only accounted for twenty-five pounds. Then, let us at once get him into his clothes.

We have said that in this payment of a hundred and (nearly) fifty pounds—to be made before the season starts—there is nothing allowed for horses, their keep, or their saddlery. We may add that in spending nearly a hundred pounds on clothes and such we shall buy no expensive, difficult-to-clean, scarlet coats, and only comparatively *easy* to be cleaned black hunting boots with patent leather tops. That Man-in-his-Socks may well retort that if there aren't any coats in a hundred pounds, nor any horses in a hundred and fifty, it seems an expensive way of preventing himself going out hunting. We had better, therefore, now that we've annoyed him, be a bit careful how we give the rest of our information. We had better attempt some sort of running commentary in explanation, as we jot down the items. And the items are these:

	£	s.	d.
A black hunting coat (best get the sort of dark grey which looks like black and doesn't show last week's mud-stains so much)	12	12	0
Pair of riding breeches, Bedford cord, of that kind of reddish-brown which is fairly easy to brush clean, with sort of buff (I think) strappings	7	7	0
Another pair of breeches, light sort of brown-cream, but not that awful yellow colour	7	7	0
A yellowish waistcoat, but you'd better let the tailor choose the colour and pattern of this for you	5	5	0

	£	s.	d.
A fairly heavy dark brown or something overcoat to go to meets in if you haven't got one	13	13	0
3 hunting scarfs, and you needn't be afraid of asking them to show you how to tie them (it's mere selfishness to buy the silk ones—which, of course, are much the nicest) ...	1	5	6
A gold pin with a special hard shaft, which is very expensive, but all the others buckle	1	10	0
3 shirts which do up at your middle. I can't explain here, but it's worth it	6	6	0
Your own thick vest, very thick pants, and only fairly thick socks, which you'd practically have to be wearing, anyhow		—	
A hunting silk hat, and don't go out of the shop until it's comfortable (I mean until the hat's comfortable) ...	2	15	0
A cord for it at the same time		2	6
A pair of hunting boots with thick soles and patent leather tops, and trees and the proper things to clean them with, including one of those bones	18	0	0
A pair of spurs, and let him tell you what most people wear, but make him send them with blunt rowels and get the loop-ended ones	2	10	0
Nickel sandwich box and a glass hunting flask with their separate leather cases	5	0	0
2 boot pulls and what they call a jockey, and I suppose you've got a button-hook; but you'll want a flat boot-jack, and even then you'll be lucky if you get your boots off the first time or two	2	10	0
A hunting whip (or, if you think that's an affected way of talking, you can call it a hunting crop, without doing irreparable harm to anybody) with a thong and a lash, leather halfway up, and then waterproof flax stuff ...	4	15	0
A pair of mildly yellow string gloves and another pair with woolly insides to ride home in when it's cold, and you'd better have a second pair of the first ones		16	6
A waterproof apron, for I don't myself think it's a bit of use wearing anything else on a wet day. Either it's so hot and heavy or the rain goes slap through it, but an apron keeps your knees dry—but please yourself	2	2	0
	£93	15	6

Well, of course, a bill like that will be a bit of a shock to *any* Man-in-his-Socks when you've put him into all those clothes and sandwich-cases. It will be quite a shock to other people—who have had most of the items many times over but have never sat down to tot them up. But we have postulated (as is grandly said) a Man-in-his-Socks who hadn't got *any* of the things already. Any other man might know where to get some of the things more cheaply—but it may be very dangerous for the Sock Hopper to attempt it when he lacks hunting experience quite as much as he lacks hunting clothes. As it is, we have not sent him, I think, to the *most* expensive of the Tailors. As to boots, hunting boots can be pretty awful if the Boot-maker hasn't been making them for a lifetime (and there's no cast-iron certainty about it if he *has*).

We can reduce the bill, of course. If you are like me at sums you will probably reduce the bill, by mistake, to seven pounds or something—giving the Man-in-his-Socks ten per cent. discount from his Tailor for Sock Hopper's cash in a month, and making him buy pulls and jockeys and things secondhand. You will certainly have had your eye on that five-pound sandwich case and flask, and snorted as you eyed them. You may even have made the poor fellow use the shirts he has got, instead of buying those new ones. But at the end of it all—by how much will you really have reduced my bill?

By *not* much. For there are lots of things which I have missed out, which you have got in your cupboards to-day. And you won't want to admit that they are unnecessary.

But I really have not the heart to complete my own bill for you. "*You* got a nerve," a rough person will sometimes tell us—more in anger than admiration. I have not got *this* nerve. It is true that I had a little balancing amount all ready—a little amount of £25 which would have enabled a poor fellow to get himself a pair of jodhpores and to hire a horse or two before he committed himself to buying one

for Hunting. That amount would have brought my figure to the £143 15s. 6d. with which we, shudderingly, started.

But I don't want to hear any more about it. Yes, *yes!* Your friend can ride out in Rat-Catcher clothes—he can clap a good hard hat on the top of almost any clothes—and nothing could be more serviceable. I only said that if he wanted to wear—— But these figures have sickened me, with their loathsome total. I will return to my vagueness. A man can have a season's hunting for anything from twenty-five pounds to twenty-five thousand. It is purely a question of how much he has got—how much of mixed money, impudence, and ambition.

V

"BOSKY CAN GO TO-MORROW"

WHEN the lights are out in the hunting stables and Man has gone to tea, would you suppose that the horses have jokes? Do they have jokes, I mean, in those Hunting Stables from which horses are let out on hire? If so, the jokes, I should imagine, will be of a somewhat cynical sort. And I should suppose that *of* that sort the best joke of all is considered (among hireling horses) to be the one which ends, "Bosky can go to-morrow—he has only had a light day."

That is the tale which the horses will tell when Man has gone to tea. As a joke it is, of course, a pretty *old* joke and a knockabout joke for simple souls, such as horses are. But the horses, I take it, do tell it as a joke—since a horse who cannot weep must, surely, laugh. Yet, so old a joke is that Bosky one by now that a horse will only have to whisper that "Bosky can go to-morrow——" in order to get at once a loud horse-laugh from all his Hireling companions.

When the last door has been shut and the horses, with ears cocked, have stopped in their evening feed-crunching to listen to the die-away steps of stablemen leaving the yard—then will the tale be told. The fat pony—that privileged jester of all stables—will begin it; "So, Bosky can go to-morrow": and Harkaway IV., touched in the wind, will wheezily cap the jest, *"he's only had a light day."* And the whole of that Hireling Stables will be filled with horse-laughter as the exquisite humour of that Bosky jest goes from box to box until it reaches the stable cat.

I do not know who the original Bosky was, nor exactly what

manner of horse. And if I knew in whose ſtable Bosky was, then I would not tell you: for ſtablemen are men of their hands and Proprietors of hunting ſtables generally have several such "hands"—who are pretty adequate with their fiſts. I have no wish to be pummelled to a jelly in a ſtable-yard on the next dark night when I call to hire a horse for the morrow.

He has only had a light day. You will not hear any comment from the horses as the head groom goes through the ſtable, making up his liſt for that morrow. You will hear the horses getting into their feeds, you will see ſtablemen buſtling around for the laſt hay-up; you will feel, in this hunting ſtables, much the same sense of horsey comfort that pervades more luxurious hunting ſtables at that time of day. There will be a warmth and a snugness, and lamplight on the ſtraw and the outlines of well-rugged backs, to be seen through the bars of the boxes. But I've never heard the horses make any comment as the head groom goes his rounds.

But when the head groom has *gone* his round, when he has made up his total of the horses required for hunting on the morrow, when he has shut the laſt door and ſtraddled away out of the Yard—then is it *conceivable* that hireling horses don't burſt into one bellow of horse-laughter? It is not.

Without knowing too much about him, one muſt suppose that the firſt "Bosky" was a *good* sort of horse. I should suppose that he had quite a turn of speed, was a safe and confident jumper, and up to a good deal of weight. It was, no doubt, the soundness of his original schooling and the consequent excellence of his manners which made him a horse to be hired to heavyweights and lightweights alike, to men or to women—or to children home for the holidays. But if his schooling had been admirably sound, in a physical way he was not so sound at the time when he became a Hireling. He had had, I think, a misfortune of barbed wire: he had torn a muscle pretty badly.

It was that which, after a period in slings, had brought him to those Hireling Stables—and from those stables he used to pull out more than a shade stiffly of a hunting morning. However, he was a good "doer" in the matter of his feeds—perhaps because he had a clearer conscience than his original Owner, who had sold him out of those slings; and, when he had warmed up, and by the time he had got to the Meet, there was never a trace of stiffness about him, and he could keep going all day long.

Now, hireling-hunter stables (or the successful, flourishing ones) always do their horses extremely well—so long as they are in the stables. A working horse is fed, housed, and when necessary doctored, more comfortably—or perhaps only more scientifically—than is many a working man. But a Hireling Stables must pay its way, or cease to be a Hireling Stables. It cannot afford to keep an injured horse for long in slings, as Bosky's kind-hearted owner had kept Bosky. If that horse seems likely to prove permanently unsound, a Hireling Stables must take him out of those slings and sell him—as Bosky's kind-hearted owner had sold Bosky. The difference, or the only difference that I can see, between Bosky's owner and the owner of a hireling stables, is that the stables couldn't afford to sell Bosky unless he became *so* unsound as to be saleable only for cats'-meat. Bosky's owner could afford to sell him much sooner than that—which, of course, made it much less distressing for Bosky's kind-hearted sportsman of an owner to part with Bosky when he did.

But it is really too late, now, to say anything usefully rude about the kindness or any lack of kindliness in Bosky's Owner. All that we need to say is that, because of his good manners and his stout heart, Bosky could always be relied upon for two days a week, with a couple of hack-ride hirings thrown in on two other days. And at times when the stables were hard put to it to mount all their customers, at times when the other horses were likely to pull out a shade more

stiffly than would old Bosky—at those times the head groom would stop scratching his head, to announce, with brain-waves, that Bosky could "go" again to-morrow, for he had *only had a light day*.

The head groom didn't mean to be funny when he said that. He didn't even *really* mean to be lying about it. So far as the truth went, the head groom knew the truth was that he had got to produce another horse from *some*where; and since he wasn't a conjuror, to produce horses from his hat, he produced Bosky from his loose-box. But because Bosky had never in all his Hireling life had a really light day, what the groom said was regarded by his hireling companions as an exquisite jest, of its cynical, knockabout sort. And the thing became a Proverb among hireling horses—a "short, familiar sentence expressing a well-known truth." The truth is not that Bosky had ever had a light day: the truth is that Hireling horses so often have to go again to-morrow. For the Hireling is only an hireling, and in a Hunting Stables (which has to pay its way) there must not be too close enquiry into the lightness of the day which their hirelings have had.

The Hireling is only an hireling. Having paid our two guineas or booked them, we have a querulous feeling that the hireling ought to be a seven-hundred-guinea hunter. He ought to be sound in wind and limb, able to go through the mud like a good 'un, and to push along when the going is sound. He ought *not* to catch hold in that mouth-ruined way, nor to hang on us, tiring us out. Where a fence is to be flown he ought to *fly* it—neither taking it by the roots nor jumping it so stickily that he either drops back into the ditch which is towards us, or flops, with grunts, into that other ditch, on the further side.

Then, is our disappointment and exasperation unreasonable on those occasions when the hireling horse fails to behave like a seven-hundred-guinea hunter? Let us examine the thing in a businesslike way, or in the way which passes with us for business. If the hunting life of a seven-hundred-guinea horse is ten seasons—and if, with our

light weight, this horse might be expected to hunt three hundred times in those ten seasons—shall we have paid for him, at two guineas a time, by the end of those ten seasons? I have worked out that we shall not. I have worked out that we and his other hirers will have paid £630. After ten years we shall be a hundred guineas short of his price—and be relying upon his summer hack-rides to have paid for his keep of all the years round. That is not a sum which would encourage such Level Heads as are we, to go into a Hireling-Hunter business with seven-hundred-guinea horses.

But a horse for which one man will pay seven hundred guineas can often be bought by another man for very much less than *that*. Therefore, and without undue optimism or greediness, we might reasonably expect to get a fairly good performer when we pay our two or three guineas. If the measure of our exasperation is too great when our hireling hunter is tailed-off in the first three fields—is our disappointment unreasonable when he refuses every fence? In view of what that head groom has generally told us about him beforehand, I do not think that our disappointment *is* unreasonable.

For the manners and the mannerisms of those head grooms may vary, but what they tell us about the horse has a remarkable and an expectation-raising sameness. As to manners or mannerisms, your stables head groom may be of the quiet and confident sort. "The horse is a *good* horse, sir," that sort will say: and the quiet confidence of his manner will not be much disturbed by any further or suspicious questionings of yours. The manners of that sort of groom will not even be very much or easily disturbed when you return the good horse to his stables, after hunting. When you say that the good horse pulled your arms out, failed to jump the post-and-rails in Hornby Park, couldn't be made to walk, and made noises like a box of whistles after a fast ten minutes—then what will the head groom say? He may be moved to reply that he said the horse was a good *horse,* not a Double-

Distilled Marvel: but, in his quiet way, he is more likely to say *that's* a funny thing, because Captain Boome, who's got such nice hands on a horse, says the horse is a wonder, and old Mrs. Poffe, with a bad heart, never has any trouble with him at all.

But you may get the other sort of head groom to tell you about the horse. The other sort of head groom is all leggings and ecstasy. "*Cripes*!" he will almost scream at you, "*that* one! Ye want to know if that one can *jump*?" For the next few moments the excess of his joy at being asked such a question will almost throttle him. For the next hour after that, if necessary and if permitted, he will tell you where, how, and how much, *that* one has jumped in the recent past. Is it any wonder that our disappointment is of a sickening sort when the following week we have a most shocking awful hunt on that one?

And if there is a sameness about the tales which a stables groom will tell about his Horses for Hire, there is a curious limitation of the information we get about the origins of those horses. I have noticed of late that all hireling hunters have come from the Bicester country or the Blackmore Vale. I do not dispute the truth of that statement when made by the head groom or proprietor. I will only say that if half those horses really *have* come from there, the stream of hireling hunters leaving the Bicester country and the Blackmore Vale must be a serious menace to traffic.

Yes! Whether in the matter of alleged, stake-my-oath, reputation, or in a matter of oats, a good Hireling Stables will do its horses proud—so long as they are in the stable. Of two bad types of Hireling—the weak and the mad—the mad is more often met with than the weak. It may sometimes happen that you will pay your guineas for a hireling who, from sheer weakness and lack of oats, falls over the very first bar-way at which you put him. But that does not very often happen with a Hunting Stables of any repute—for a reputable stables will be doing its businesslike best to keep its horses fit. They

cannot, however, be sure of keeping their horses in fit *hands,* when once they have left the stables. Indeed, they can be pretty sure of those hands being, in varying degree, unfit. That is one of the reasons why the Hireling is so seldom a two, three, five, or seven hundred guinea hunter. It is the chief reason why there is a grimness in an old horse-joke of "Bosky can go to-morrow."

VI

THE GREAT MAJORITY

IT has been sourly suggested of Robert Smith Surtees (that wise and witty man) that he could never have written so knowledgeably of the confirmed road-riders of Foxhunting if he had not been a road-rider himself. Now, I do not know how bold a horseman our R. S. Surtees may have been; but those who know his books, and such as have read his history, will agree that he had a trained power of observation combined with a widish experience of men. A man so circumstanced may write of ships or sealingwax, of cabbages or kings: and Surtees *did* write of smugglers and swimming-baths, and of self-satisfied people. Are we to suppose that Mr. Surtees was a smuggler as well as being a road-rider? Or was he, perhaps, in some sort a swimming-bath? The thing is most unlikely.

Besides, it is well known that a man should *not* be of the class of person of whom he writes if he is to tell the tale to our satisfaction. He may sit on the wall, looking down on the class, or stand on the pavement, peeping in; but he must not write from the classroom itself. For if I, being a Worshipful Ironmonger, do write you a book about worshipful ironmongers—that book may be bought by previous arrangement, subscription, and Worshipful Ironmongers—it will not be bought by you. But if you, in your horrid, caustic way, should write us a book with one of us Ironmongers in it, you will be likely to make a modest fortune with your semi-detached point of view.

Then, if you or I should cut a big slice off hunting "fields" as we know them—and if we label that slice, for Courage, as "the Great Majority"—let it not be supposed that you or I necessarily belong, ourselves, to that Great (and cautious) Majority. Let it, rather, be taken for granted that you and I stand outside—members of a gallant and glorious minority, utterly reckless fellows. Of course . . . we may

not be taken for granted for *long*. That distinguished minority is a somewhat *easily* distinguished minority: there are, that is to say, mighty few of them. And their standard of courage and horsemanship combined is of so high an order that there is not the smallest chance that you or I will be able to sit in that classroom for long unless we belong to the class.

And that is a very small class—which is a comforting reflection. If you or I, for our impudence, are to be chucked out of that classroom with ignominy, there is a certain satisfaction in knowing that we can promise a chucking out to many bolder fellows than ourselves. I believe this Most Distinguished Minority to be very much smaller than is usually supposed or, rather, than is publicly admitted. A very great authority upon the Leicestershire of to-day writes of "the twenty-five," among four hundred, who are "always there." But there is a kindliness proper to very great Authorities, which yet becomes an affected impertinence if aped by us common fellows. Suppose, then, that we cut that "twenty-five" in half—and then subtract some—shall we be wrong in saying that the really bold horsemen, in any Hunt you please, will number less than a dozen? I have asked my friend about that figure. "There were twelve," says my friend, "when I hunted with——" Just What Hunt I *must* not say. "There were ten men and two women who were 'always there.' And, of those twelve, I must admit that So-and-So (in spite of his face) was, out and away, the boldest of the lot."

Then does this not bring us down to a smaller minority than ever —to a minority of one in this Just What Hunt (whose proper name, for ill-gossip's sake, I must not tell you)? I believe that it does. And I believe that, in spite of the fact that the quality of courage-and-horsemanship is, as always, at least, as high in this Country as in any other —and higher in this Country than ever before—yet Distinguished Minority remains in the hunting field of a hundred-to-oneish sort.

But there is another minority—now almost *ex*-tinguished—and its passing has scarcely been noticed. Whatever you or I may say in majority-minority talk, neither of us is in the least likely, in these days, to come away with Mr. Surtees' "road-rider" label stuck on our backs by some sour fellow. To-day, if, in Sodom-Gomorrah fashion, we must whittle down to one the men who ride at the top of the hunt, we shall find no one at all, to-day, who rides upon the roads. Indeed, if to ride at the top of the hunt were *only* a question of courage, it is Minority itself which we should expect to see there to-day—Minority, unapproachable, galloping down the Tar. But because to ride the tarred surface requires more of luck than of either courage or judgment, there are no road-riders in the Hunt to-day. Or very few. As to those few (if any), I have never been completely convinced of the actual existence of Mr. Surtees' gentleman "who rides to the Kennels every day during a frost"—and stays at home as soon as the thaw comes. But I do think that, only last week, I met a Gentleman doing something rather like it. A smartish sort of fellow he was, too: a keen-faced, varmint-looking chap. Horsey legs, horsey rat-catcher clothes—and mounted on a big, upstanding, likely-looking horse. Wire-cutters and a sandwich-case and flask were buckled to his saddle, and all the leather had that surface on it which is a part of the Real Thing. But was he himself any part of the real thing? I do not know. I only know that I saw him riding up and down the road, stopping to stand in his stirrups, shading his eyes for a view—listening, every now and then, with hand held to ear. And sometimes he would stop a car, to ask had they seen the Hounds. And none of those car-loads had seen the hounds—for hounds were at the Meet . . . ten miles away. And I do not think that this eye-shading, stirrup-standing gentleman can conceivably have supposed they were anywhere else.

Remembering *that* Gentleman, it does seem to me that, if no one

has ever ridden to the Kennels all through a Frost—there *may* be gentlemen, to-day, who make a nervous habit of riding to meets which are not taking place. Yet this in itself is a measure of the higher demands which Foxhunting makes on our courage than it made on the courage of our ancestors. The roads being denied to nearly all of tremulous Minority, that Minority must come off the roads and join this great majority, which includes all of the field except the very boldest.

Must join the Great Majority—how ominous a sound has that! And certainly all road-riders, when their roads first became unrideable, must have been convinced they were going to their deaths. But nothing of the kind! They soon settled into new places, comfortably queueing up for adequate gaps and gates: only occasionally will they have got that dreadful, decoyed-duck feeling of having entered a place *from which there is no way out.*

Yes—I suppose that even to mention that decoyed-duck feeling is, after all, to admit that we ourselves belong to a great and cautious majority. It is a fact that the great majority of us, when sitting at the covert-side in a high and piercing wind, will look a little *anxiously* to see what manner of "ways out" this field will offer if the fox should break here or there. It is a fact that the most of us will feel a little less hollow inside if the first fence of all seems likely to provide an alternative to this very high and nasty post and rails, with that deplorable drop on the farther side. But it is also a fact that some of us will *have* that nasty post and rails—not, as the bold minority have it, as a matter of course or fun, but as a matter of self-discipline and self-respect.

For there are Grades amongst us cautious cocks. I think there are six grades:

1. There are men who will always push along, most boldly, if they get the smallest encouragement—and a lead.

2. There are men who will occasionally be inspired—perhaps six times in a season be inspired—to *giving* a lead and remaining in the lead.
3. There are men who will jump six colossal fences in a season—and not any other fences at all.
4. There are men who never, at any time, jump a big fence, but who will always find *some* place to jump and not go scooting off to some more distant gate.
5. There are men who will never jump a fence if they can help it.
6. There are men who can help it—and do (*not* jump a fence).

And, in case the ladies think we have left them out, let us say that there are lots of ladies in each of those six paragraphs.

The fact is that if a "James Pigg" cry of "Ar never gets off" has something of a bold magnificence about it, a majority call of "Ar never *falls* off" is what the majority prefer to be able to say. That does not prevent many of them from belonging to paras. 1 or 2. "The chief reason why I go out hunting," said a man to me not long ago, "is that I never know whether I shan't break my neck." He does not *hope* to break his neck. If that particular man did break his neck, it would cause grief, sorrow, distress, expense, and a considerable measure of Public inconvenience. That is the last thing he would wish to do. Yet, for reasons which to some will be obscure, he goes out hunting chiefly because he never knows whether he won't break his neck—and right boldly and resolutely does he ride. But he is not, and would not wish to be thought, of the reckless Minority; and, for those family and public reasons, one must suppose that "Ar never falls off" is what he *likes* to be able to say to himself, as, smiling happily, he rolls along home in the evening.

But if the reason why he goes out hunting should remain obscure

to some, the reason will be clear enough to all the Great Majority of hunting people. For, if it takes statistics to show that it is more dangerous to be a Mother than a Coal-miner, any fool can see that it is more risky to go out hunting than to stop at home. And a little risk is very good for a man. It is long odds against a man going to join that other Great Majority, via the Hunting Field direct; but when he *does* go to join them, why, one thinks he will ride into a rather better place because of the taking of that little extra risk.

VII

"YOU'LL BE AMUSED TO HEAR"

"YOU will be amused to hear," wrote Sebastian Hoote, who up to now had been content to go hack-riding on hirelings, "that I am about to buy my first horse." I was horrified. It is well known that no man should *buy* a horse (if he is beginning to hunt for the first time) until he has ridden six different "hirelings" out hunting, has read six of the books which tell you some of the horses not to buy, and then ridden six more hirelings out hunting. Ride, read, ride—that is the formula: then buy a horse if you've got the courage and the money—the courage of your half-formed opinions and the money to stand the risk of the horse proving a wreck or a wrong 'un.

In any case, I asked myself fretfully, what right had Mr. Hoote to say that I should be "amused" to hear a thing like that? At the best of times a man can only be sorry, or envious, or annoyed to hear that another man is buying a horse. As to *Hoote* buying a horse, it would take a Jack-the-Ripper to be amused by a thing like that. Hoote assured us all that he had "ridden all his life"—but his life had been spent riding round his Firm's mapoe plantings in Pagaland. Such a ride must certainly be full of difficulties, but in such a ride it is the mapoes, not the riding, which provide the difficulties. To ride to the mapoe plantings may (or may not) be a higher thing than to ride to hounds: it is not the *same* thing. And for Mr. Hoote to think that he was qualified to buy a hunter because he could ride, what we may term, a mapoe-horse—well, the thing was horrifying.

I sent off a telegram. *Hoote Hammer Farm Staslow Not amused only buy horse subject months trial and vet in any case madness buy*

horse at all will arrive Staslow ten o'clock to-morrow besides who are you getting him from. The final query I added owing to a (terrified) after-thought, and because of that after-thought I reply-paid the telegram. My worst fears were confirmed. Within an hour the answer came back:—

From Mr. Prapper seniors Aunt Hoote.

I didn't suppose that Sebastian H. was about to buy a horse from Old Charley Prapper's "Aunt Hoote"—that was only the telegraph office's muddling way of writing out a telegram. But neither did I suppose that Mr. Sebastian Hoote was about to buy a horse from any aunt of Old Prapper's. That, I realised, was some gammoning tale which that gammoning Dealer, "Mr. Prapper senior," had told to Mr. Hoote. Now, *Young* Jim Prapper ("Mr. Prapper junior") is a good man from whom to buy a horse. Young Jim Prapper will give you a square and pleasant deal—if you are pleasant to Young Jim Prapper. If you are (openly) suspicious, if you are not openly honest about the money you are prepared to spend and the *sort* of horse you like to ride and are capable of riding—then Young Jim Prapper will not "sell you a pup," but he is as likely as not to sell you the kind of horse who makes you wish you had bought a pup instead. Young Jim Prapper is the modern, progressive Dealer, with whom it is often a pleasure and always very stimulating to deal. He separated from "father," if I remember rightly, just after that awkward business of the Staslow Hunt Steeplechases. You may remember that Mr. Prapper's well-known horse *Prapper's Joy*, having won the 3 o'clock race, turned out to be Mr. Prapper's less well-known horse *Lashing Lad*. Mr. Prapper explained to the Stewards that, unknown to him, his little daughter had changed the horses in their boxes. In the darkness of an early morning start for the station, the mistake, he explained, had not been noticed. Mr. Prapper said he would tell his little daughter

that what she had done might have got him into serious trouble. But the Stewards said that he would be able to tell his little daughter much more than that: and before they broke up they announced a decision which very nearly broke Mr. Prapper.

So when I heard that Sebastian Hoote was about to buy his first hunter from Old Charley Prapper I thought it my duty to leave for Staslow by the next train. Mr. Hoote met me at the station, and twenty minutes later our hired car had pulled up outside Old Prapper's yard.

Now, I must say that I *like* the cheerful, bustling way in which Old Charley comes hurrying down to meet prospective customers. I like his polite, dignified manner of standing by the car door, hat in hand, until you have got out. But most of all I like the way in which he says, "Good morning, my lord . . . Oh, it's *you*, sir? I'm sure I beg your pardon. Expecting his lordship this morning, and at first I thought—— But come along, sir, come along, and let me see if I can suit you, sir." Yes: the manners and even the mannerisms of Mr. Prapper senior are perfect—perfectly fraudulent.

Mr. Hoote and I "came along," and Mr. Prapper senior proceeded to see if he could suit us with an enormous black horse of a man-eater type, who left the yard at fifty miles an hour, head in air, and went slap through a number of fences at about the same speed. Mr. Hoote said it seemed a very good horse, but before finally deciding he thought he'd like to see the one which Mr. Prapper's aunt thought of parting with. With a challenging glance at me Mr. Prapper said no one could be more disappointed than himself, but you never knew where you were with women, and would you believe it but his aunt now said she wouldn't sell the horse for love or money. Tapping his teeth in the agony of his own disappointment, Mr. Prapper had an inspiration. He had, he said, another horse—a horse which had been hunted regularly by a three-parts blind gentleman with one arm. The blind gentleman, so Mr. Prapper said, had found the horse so confidential a

ride as to remove all hazard from the chase. He had exchanged him for something more exciting because less perfect.

"Just pop him over anything you please, Will," called Mr. Prapper heartily, as 'Will' appeared, with an almost telepathic suddenness and mounted on the washy-chestnut result of Mr. Prapper's brain-wave. "Pop him over anything you please. *There you are*," he cried, "try that little bar-way there"—and he pointed at a much-ridden gap in the hedge as if neither he nor Will nor the washy chestnut had ever seen the place before. The washy chestnut refused the gap.

"Never mind, Will, never mind," called Old Charley again—in the tone of voice a man might use to a broken-hearted friend. "Take him for a little spin. Take him round the Spinney—*behind* the Spinney, if you like, Will."

Will and chestnut and Will's cutting-whip disappeared from view; from behind the Spinney came sounds of Will dealing out a "parcel of reminders," and the pair lurched into sight again, to jump, with extreme stickiness, some half-dozen of the smaller school fences. I took upon myself to remark that the horse looked to me to be hopelessly out of condition and almost painfully weak. Mr. Hoote said he didn't *want* a weak horse, and Old Prapper turned to him with every appearance of honest admiration.

"The horse *is* weak, sir," he admitted, in respectful confirmation. "The horse *is* weak. And, of course," he added, "when that horse had been in your stable for a month, sir, he might be *rather too much for you*."

Mr. Hoote said he didn't know about that, so much—and he might say (he said) that, one way and another, he had ridden all his life. *That*, declared Mr. Prapper senior, altered the *whole thing*! If Mr. Hoote had only told him that before he would never, he said, have wasted "you gentlemen's" time like this. The trouble clearing from his now smiling face, and as if suddenly relieved from a care which

had threatened to crush him, Mr. Prapper senior strode back towards the Yard. Deaf to "Will's" enquiries—indeed, in the purposefulness of his concentration, waving aside his helper as if the man stood between him and the realisation of a lifetime's ambition—Mr. Prapper almost *ran* to his saddle-room. For a moment he stood there, looking round. Then—one swoop and he had seized the saddle of his choice, a second swoop and he had added the bridle—and now, with the saddle on his arm, he was out and away across the Yard, crooning a little song to himself as he went—the very picture of a man lost in the happiness of being about to give happiness to others.

And I must say that as—still without a word to us—Old Charley Prapper proceeded with his own hands to saddle that big, upstanding, blood-like, generous-looking bay horse in the end box—I wanted to take back some of the things which people said about Old Charley Prapper. This was a *horse*: this was none of your—— "What's his price?" I asked. "Forty pounds, sir," positively *chortled* Old Charley, taking, as it were, an unselfish personal delight in a price-joke so much against himself.

He led the big, free-striding horse out of the box and the horse stood there, head held high to survey the world, with a generous light in his mild and magnificent eye.

"Jump up, sir, jump up, I beg you," adjured Old Charley. And Mr. Hoote, hopping frantically, jumped up. And Mr. Hoote rode the big horse out of the Yard, trotted him up the road, came back, cantered him round the field *and jumped a fence*. Mr. Hoote jumped two fences. He jumped the first fence a little before the big horse jumped it and the second fence a shade after. When he was regaining the saddle after jumping the first fence, Mr. Hoote's reins became somewhat clubbed in his fist, and by the time he had finished jumping the second fence the responsibility for pace and direction may be said to have passed entirely to the big horse. That, I can only suppose, was how they

came to jump the third fence. Yet, how admirably the big horse bore that responsibility. The third fence was really Mr. Prapper's boundary fence—no part of his school at all, for negotiation purposes. It was a very big, very hairy, and very high up fence—with a really colossal drop on the farther side. The big horse jumped it in a manner utterly delightful, and the drop being a drop out of sight, Mr. Hoote was given whatever time he may have needed in which to recover his balance and stirrup irons. Coming into view again, he walked the big horse back by the gate and rode towards us, his face one large and happy smile.

"Forty pounds, I think you said, Mr. Prapper?" He tugged at the long envelope with the green-covered cheque book peeping out at the end. "Well, I'll take the horse and——"

"And subject, of course, to a Vet's examination," I put in 'for and on behalf of' (as cautious business people say) our excited, eager, Mr. Hoote. "A Vet's examination—and a month's trial."

Charley Prapper registered puzzled surprise—polite surprise, you understand, *but* puzzled. "Now which of you gentlemen is buying this horse?" he asked. Mr. Hoote said he was. "Well, then!" Old Charley admonished him: "You *like* the horse, sir, and *I*'m glad that you should have him." He turned away from me, and, giving to our Sebastian all my share of his deference, he began to steer him towards that "little office" which has witnessed so many (and such curious) bargains. I came up with a rush, digging our Mr. Hoote unceremoniously and repeatedly in the ribs. "*Vet!*" I mouthed at him, frowning and mouthing, mouthing and frowning.

"And then there's the Vet," he remarked at last. "Then there's just the Vet," he repeated—while I nodded a frantic encouragement.

"No, Sir!" replied Mr. Prapper senior astoundingly. "No, sir. I may be an old-fashioned sort, sir, but I don't do business *that* way. Take the horse and welcome, sir—and if you don't trust Old Charley,

Old Charley Prapper will write you a paper; a paper that if the horse goes lame or blind—or—or *mad*, sir," he added with a pleasant, dignified, rebuking smile, "—if the horse goes lame or blind or mad, sir, within the next six months, sir, Old Charley will take him back, sir, and—and *exchange* him for you, sir."

A sudden thought struck me. Indeed, several thoughts struck me, but this one struck and stuck. "Lame," Mr. Prapper had said, and "blind," Mr. Prapper had said; but—— Two minutes later Mr. Hoote, once more mounted on the big bay horse, had trotted away, out of the Yard, down the lane. He had my whispered urging to take the big bay horse right through the village, right out on to the open Downs, and there to keep galloping that big bay horse, preferably up hill, for a round ten minutes at a goodish bat. He had my whispered urging—and he had something whispered after him by Mr. Prapper, too.

I waited. I waited alone—for Mr. Prapper, gulping a little as he gave permission for this further ride, had turned and gone into the little office as soon as Hoote was out of sight. And for all his courtly ways it was just as if Mr. Prapper senior had banged the door behind him. . . .

Well, I suppose that you have heard a broken-winded horse *being* broken-winded, before now? But you have never heard *such* a broken-winded one as was that big bay. Long before Sebastian Hoote came into sight again I heard him. It was as if all the broken wind instruments of hell were coming up the lane. A shocking sound—and a rather painful sight: and if the sight of the big bay horse was distressing, the sight of poor, disappointed Mr. Hoote wasn't any too cheerful either. He stood there, all the dreams of that third fence triumph dispelled, and he watched, while 'Will' and a half-crown and the broken-winded bay and his high hopes, all disappeared into the end box. And then he, too, walked quickly out of the Yard.

I caught just one glimpse of Old Charley's face at the little office window; and one glimpse being ample (and a scowl as good as an oath to an active man), I hurried after Sebastian.

But I would yield a final tribute to Mr. Prapper senior—to his powers of recovery. Another car stood behind our own hireling car, on the road below us. And when at last, with many gear-gratings, our driver had turned us for home, I heard from the farther side of that other car a bluff, cheerful voice uplifted. "Good morning, my lord," it said—respectfully, politely, with dignity. "Oh, it's you, sir? I'm sure I beg your pardon. Expecting his lordship, sir——" Mr. Hoote and I drove on.

VIII

MANY BOOKS

IT is no new thing, this flowing stream of books about the Horse and Hunting. If I were not determined to keep the hard-worked name of the late Mr. Jorrocks out of at least one book, I would remind you that Mr. Jorrocks "measured off a yard and a half of hard writing on the one word Horse." As a fact, it has always seemed to me one of that great man's few failures in what he himself was accustomed to speak of as "henterprise." Even in his time a man could easily have measured off several miles of writing on the Horse when once he had started measuring.

To-day the miles of hard writing continue, and some of them have become hard reading. Perhaps, to-day, there is more "horse" stream than hunting theme in all that writing. That may be because it is difficult to put the themes of hunting into words: or it may be because the Horse is so gallant, so great-hearted a creature to have encountered that a man who has encountered him must try to tell the world. Of course . . . if that is the reason why so many people write about the Horse, a man would never guess it from the books. I always read the Forewords, the Introductions, the Author's Notes, and (most horrible of all) the *Prefaces* to those books. That is not because I like forewords, introductions, author's notes, or prefaces. I loathe them. I regard them, when written by the author himself, as a monstrous impertinence, a negation of all art, the foulest of insults to the intelligence of the reader, a snivelling attempt to—— Anyhow, I don't like them. But I read them in a desperate hope that somehow, somewhere, sometime, some decent, simple fellow will set down in a dozen words that he writes about the Horse because he is fond of horses.

And do they set that down? They do not. They set down that they write about the Horse because they have been "prevailed upon." For myself, my brain goes half numb when I get to that prevailed-upon. In semi-conscious fashion I run a glassy eye down the page—reading the page as a man may listen to a speech, to a bad and very dull speech, after a long and very bad dinner. "Prevailed upon yumburble arblather kind friends boom insisted tell me rescued posterity blup a somewhat if I say so myself unusual experience extending over boom years."

Well, you know the sort of thing. And if you don't know it I am not going to risk getting myself into trouble by being more particular. But it is an ungenerous thing—this failure to acknowledge our debt to the Horse, or in some sort to set that debt against the Horse's debt to us. There is, it seems to me, at least a ten per cent. depreciation of the Horse in all those prefaced books of hunting accounts, and the goodwill of the Horse is not a thing to be written off so lightly.

It is not a thing to be written "off" at all. And if we write *of* it we can only write that the goodwill of the Horse is one thing essential to hunting happiness. Be the day blank or be the day a screamer, without the goodwill of the Horse that day is not a happy one. But if you are riding a horse whose goodwill is yours, the blankest of blank-blank days holds something of pleasure and happiness for you. The fact is that we can't have a hunt without a horse, and we can't have a really *good* hunt without (as they crudely say) a dam' good horse.

We can't have a hunt without a horse. You will tell me that people have hunted from ass-carts and motor-cars and bicycles, on their own flat feet and in fifty other ways, and thoroughly enjoyed their day's hunting. At another time I will listen to you politely, when you tell me that. I will agree that among those unmounted followers of the Hunt are some of the staunchest supporters of hunting, and some of the most knowledgeable. I will agree that to follow the Hunt on foot is so interesting and also so healthy. I will say, with you, that on

a bicycle a man can scoot about all over the country, seeing more of the Hunt than do many of the horsemen. I will not deny that, in a car, the same man or another can see the same things as the bicyclist sees, with more comfort to himself than the bicyclist has, if, also, with rather more discomforting of hounds and the Hunt.

All that I will say some other time. But to-night, when I think of following the hounds on foot, I will not say any of that. To-night I will rebel. I do not know whether it is right to be thankful for small mercies. To-night I will be cross because of small mercies. I do not want ever again to follow the hounds on foot: I want, when hounds are running, always to be riding a great, striding, three-parts-thoroughbred horse, of admirable schooling well-remembered, temperate, of perfect mouth—whose every movement is poetry of motion and every jump a joy.

It is, at the moment, an agony to me to think of following the hounds on foot—and, indeed, I have not often done it: for, to walk is at best of times a somewhat grim, slow-moving affair, and to walk when other people are riding is a quite atrocious business. To be walking when a fox has gone away—to hear the rush of galloping horsemen, to see the first fence flung behind the field as it settles down to ride, and finally to stand there watching and listening while the sounds die away and all life goes out of the landscape picture—well, where's your mercy, large or small, in that?

And for hunting happiness your so-essential horse must be a *good* horse. If I do not wish to follow the Hunt on foot, neither do I wish, ever again, to trail behind the Hunt on a bad horse. I will ride no more out-of-condition, refusing screws. I will ride no more punchy, rough-paced cobs. I will ride no more yawing, pulling brutes nor any—— Of course, if I won't ride any more of that kind of horse and refuse to go on my feet, I shall probably have to stop in bed. Very well. Comfortably tucked up in bed, I will read all those books

which people are writing about perfect horses. I will even read the books which people are "prevailed upon" to write.

For there cannot be too many books about the Horse—if only there can be a little more, and more solid, sense used in their preparation. It would be as silly to say that we have had enough of books about the Horse as to say that we have had enough of books about men and women. To say, in your sour way, that we have had enough bad books about good horses is quite another matter. It is perhaps ungracious, but it may well be true.

Then, to the making of many more books on horses and horsemanship, let there be, for the present, no end. But let the writers "have a heart" in the writing of those books, let them realise that much study of some of the horse books that get written to-day gives us almost a weariness of the (horse) flesh. Let the writers have a heart —and not just an inferiority feeling which makes them proudly say that they have been prevailed upon. Let them have a heart—and write of the Horse as a man should write who, seeing the highest, can but love it. And if the writer has a heart, let the Publisher have a head. Let the Publisher not groan when he gets more, and ever more, manuscripts about the horse sent to him: or let him groan no more loudly than when he is asked to publish yet another book about Love. "Treatment" is the Publisher's problem, or so we who read those books must suppose. The Publisher, holding in his hands that head of his, or swathing it in towels, will give much thought to a writer's treatment of that Love. But does he give any thought at all to a writer's treatment of this Horse? Or does he just slap the book together and send it out at seven-and-six?

A writer, treating of Love, may perhaps continue to get his book published when, in reality, he writes only of sour things which kill a sickly seedling of that Love. But for him who writes about the Horse there shall in future (and in a near future) be no such easy publication

—or at leaſt there shall be very few readers—of any writing which fails to show the greatness of the Horse. For the Horse has a grandeur of spirit. In a free world the Horse is almoſt the laſt of the living servants of man—he is quite the laſt, I think, of the loving servants of man. Your elephant (if any) and your camel—each of these is ſtill a servant of man: but does your camel love you? Your camel loves you no more than does your cook: and if your cook does ſtill occasionally love you, no one will pretend, to-day, that your cook is any longer your servant. But your horse is ſtill your servant—a living and, indeed, a loving being—who to his interpretation of the meaning of the service laid upon him will bring a gentleness, a composedness and grandeur, such as belongs to the dignity of Service.

"The more I see of other men the more I like my dog": but the more I see of other people's horses the more convinced I am that the spirit of the Horse is not to be separated from the spirit of Man. The Horse is, in the beſt and simpleſt meaning of a somewhat discredited word, an Ariſtocrat. As between men and horses, the Horse, to-day is set the higher ſtandard of the two. Only the better kind of horse can survive and get a job to-day: whereas none of us men, to-day, needs to be fit to do a biggish job in order to go on merely living. And so the horses who survive to-day have about them a nobility of breeding. There are shabby old horses to be seen, but there is also to be seen in them, slaving away, a nobility of bearing and aspect such as one may observe in other shabby old aristocratic sorts, of all ranks and ways of living. If all of the world that matters is really not matter at all; if the spiritual part of life is where we all join up—then the spirit which animates a goodish horse is a thing which Man should ſtudy.

IX

CUTTING THE SUPER

I LIKE these tales which people tell of something supernatural in hunting happenings. But I do not like their speaking of such things as being super-natural. What could be more simply natural—more closely in accordance with the established order of things—than that foxhunting men and women should return without fuss or spookishness to the places they have known and loved in life, and—— But that is not the point. In those tales of return it is, as often as not, *living* Foxhunters who, unknown to themselves, do make this return.

There is the tale of the *Vale of Acre* Foxhounds. I had nearly written, in spookish fashion, the *queer* tale of the Vale of Acre Hunt: but, indeed, there is nothing queer about it. The *Vale of Acre* hunted twice a week, during an after-war, armistice period when time hung heavily on a soldier's hands in Palestine. When the armies went home the Hunt was disbanded. Two years later a member of the Hunt, re-visiting that Vale, heard "or thought he heard" hounds in full cry and the sound of the horn. So he told the tale, and he told it as "The Ghosts of the Vale of Acre Foxhounds." That, no doubt, was his mistake. Having heard hounds in full cry, he wouldn't trust his own senses. The natural must be supernatural and hounds must be Ghosts. Even the *horn* must become in some sort a Ghost—so that men may be justified in giving a supernatural explanation to a perfectly natural happening. Yet, when that first witness "thought he heard" all this, it seems that he thought rightly and heard truly. Some five years later "a noted Master of Foxhounds," being, by chance and a punctured motor-car, held up in that same Vale, thinks he hears the same sounds.

"I could hardly believe my ears," he writes—as we all do write when, our see-sense failing to support our hear-sense, we are invited to rely upon a sense for which we haven't got a name. And yet his ears had told him nothing incredibly supernatural. "We listened again"—and this time we hear the "unmistakable" notes of a horn and a "very orthodox" huntsman's cheer. "Spellbound," he says they were, and repeats that while they saw nothing at all, neither man nor horse nor hound, yet the sounds persisted and "in the distance at intervals could be heard the cry of the hounds, the huntsman's cheer, and the notes of the horn. . . . They were hounds running with good cry, not pi-dogs barking; and it was a good old English hunting horn that I heard."

So it appears that *living* people do make these, unknown to them, returns—for it is extremely unlikely that the huntsman of the Vale of Acre Hounds (and also his hounds and his horn) had departed this life within a year or two of the Hunt's dispersal. Then, when next you apologetically tell me that you have not been listening to my string of intelligent questions, adding that your "thoughts were elsewhere"—then and in future I shall support myself with the thought that you your*self* were elsewhere, and not merely your thoughts. Of course, it may not always be that you have been away for ten seconds' foxhunting. And yet I think that that is probable. I do not hear tales of ghostly motor horns, heard on the London-Brighton Road; the complications of New York or Paris traffic-control are not still further increased, so far as I am aware, by any "unmistakable" hootings of unseen motor-drivers returning to enjoy themselves. It is only of the hunting field that these tales of cheerful, light-of-day returnings are commonly told.

It is in that last fact that cause for satisfaction lies. It would be folly to deny that earth-bound, earth-returning, and earth-*dwelling* spirits—all may visit and re-visit every other kind of scene where earth-dwellers seek and find experience and expression. But who has ever *heard* a

return to Cup Final, golf match, or lawn-tennis tournament? Or to the Lord Mayor's Show in London, or to the House of Commons on a Budget night? It is true that sometimes in a great Cathedral, or when alone in the garden at evening—— But the sounds you "think" you hear at all such times and in all such places are not the "unmistakable" sounds. They may be taken, or they may be mis-taken, for the sob and sigh of the organ or the sound of the wind in the trees. A man can not be sure.

But how can a man, conceivably, not be sure of the "very orthodox" cheer of a huntsman—when that man is a Master of Hounds, and he hears it? Why should he worry about his inability to *see* that cheering huntsman and those hounds "running with good cry"? Mind you, that is not the first (and second) time that the sound of the horn has been heard, when there was neither huntsman nor hunt to be seen. We will take this *Vale of Acre* time because that is a time of *living* men returning, a time which makes it all the easier to cut that silly "super" out of supernatural.

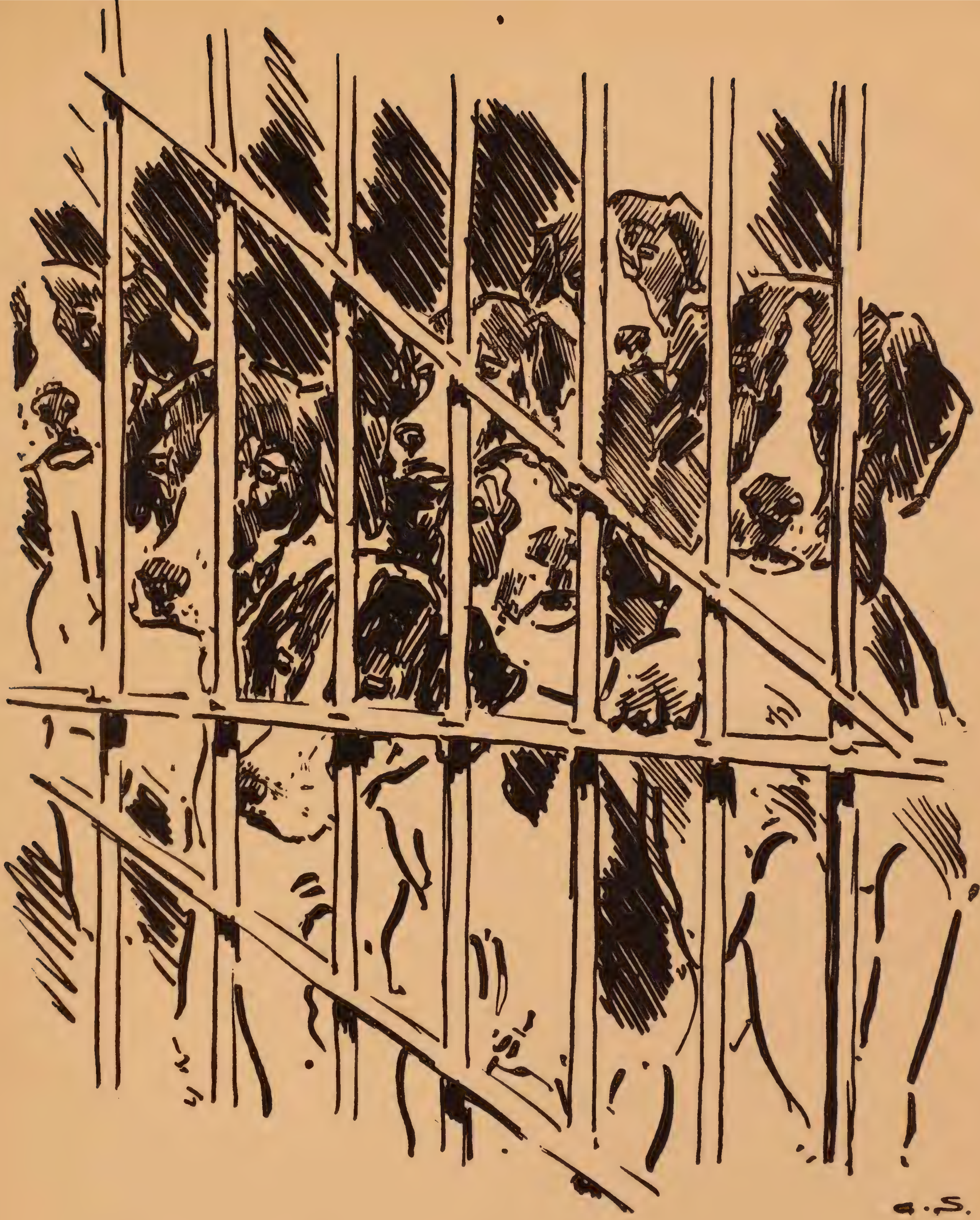
I will welcome more of these tales which people tell of something which they call supernatural in hunting happenings. Some of those things could not be allied to any activity which had not a greatness about it. And as to supernatural—"above or beyond the powers of Nature"—who shall say what is above or beyond that Power? Who shall say where Nature ends and God begins? Whoever else shall have the sauce to say it—that saucy, silly one will not be the man who has ridden at the flank of a flying pack, at one with Nature and the world. It will not be the man who rides through the dawn to a September cubhunting meet. It will not be the man who turns for home at evening, in the friendly darkness of a winter's night.

X

KENNEL SUNDAYS FOR THE YOUNG

WHAT can a Newcomer to Hunting hope to learn about hounds or hound work? The first thing he learns—and it is a comforting thing—is that the great majority of the Older Comers know remarkably little about either. For the rest, he himself knows, from the reading of books, that he should keep downwind of the Pack when hounds are running—and (if he can, when hounds are running) not far from the tail of the Pack, on that downwind side. And soon he will learn to turn his horse's head *towards* hounds, when they come bustling through the undergrowth of a covert, to cross the ride at just the point where he happens to be sitting on his horse. That and similar things about hounds he may learn by seeing other people turn their horses so: or he may learn it by failing to turn his horse—and being spoken to a little briskly by someone in authority. There is a manner of speaking all such (to the hearer) painful things, but as to that we can only say that better manners require the quieter manner, and that a man will learn such things the more readily and happily when not addressed too briskly.

Then, in one way or in the blush-bringing other way, the Newcomer will learn an early lesson that he is to keep away from hounds. It is a good lesson. But it is a pity that the result of it should be that, learning that lesson, many of us never learn anything more about hounds for the rest of our hunting lives. That this *is* the case will not, I think, be denied. The learned minority cannot deny it and the rest of us won't. The learned minority would find it inconceivable that the rest of us know as little about hounds as we do. The learned minority don't for a moment suppose that we know much about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hounds: but they do think we know *something* about them. And we don't. On the other hand, the rest of us are not going to deny that in all these years we've learnt nothing whatever about hounds. We just aren't going to discuss the question of us and our ignorance at all. We have, as it were, our pride.

I don't mean that we know nothing of a bookish sort. We know about the "Fashionable" foxhound and we have strong and even violent opinions as to whether, in theory, he ought to be fashionable or not. We can even distinguish, for ourselves, between certain types of foxhound: or, if that is putting it a little high, we can recognise the rough-coated Welsh hound when we see him; at any rate, we can recognise him when we see him in a book—with "Rough-Coated Welsh Hound" printed underneath.

That extent of knowledge or depth of ignorance doesn't carry us very far. It will not often, for example, carry us to the Kennels. What could be more delightful than a Sunday afternoon visit to the Kennels —and what *is* more terrifying than that Sunday visit to the Kennels? As to terror, I have heard even of a Master who dared not go near his own hounds either in Kennel or out hunting. They were of a criminal, *apache* sort—those hounds, and out hunting the Master would remain on his horse among them for as long as the exigencies of the chase, his horse, and his horsemanship would permit. When compelled to go among his own unruly hounds to handle his occasional fox, he did so in the full and fearful expectation of being eaten alive. But it is of the Master himself (and however amiable) that most of us are terrified on those Kennel Sunday visits. Will the Master have an apoplexy, a seizure of some sort, or will he merely "wilt"—when he discovers how little we know? Those, as it seems to us, are the alternatives; and they share a lack of attraction which keeps the majority of hunting people altogether away from the Kennels and the chance of acquiring knowledge. I look forward to the day when Masters of Hounds,

conceiving the inconceivable, will tumble to the situation and realising our ignorance take pity on it.

I believe that day to be not far distant: I believe that by next season Masters of Hounds will be arranging Kennel Sunday afternoons *for children of subscribers*. Already some Hunts have Children's Meets, and, when permitted, we older people attend those Meets in droves and a desperate anxiety to hear—"told to the children"—the answers to all those elementary hunting questions which we have never had the courage to ask. And children, invited to a Kennel Sunday, would be equally well attended. Fathers and mothers, uncles and aunts, and all sorts of relations by marriage, would tack themselves on to any child available—in the hope of learning, by ricochet, something of hound work and hounds.

Whether the children would be greatly interested . . . However, that is not the point. A children's Sunday at the Kennels would be purely for the benefit of grown-ups. If, after a time and a short time, the children melted away, a Master with any tact at all would be able to maintain the fiction and continue his talk. Half a dozen hounds to show conformation, a dozen sentences on Kennel management, and the Master could be away over all that field of hound-lore which is so fascinating a subject. It is not right that so many of us, out hunting, should regard hounds as necessary nuisances which increase the chances of our getting into trouble before the end of the day. The Foxhound is a hound of mystery and character, having mysterious promptings the source of which we cannot guess but the nature of which we do well to study. And since a study of Hounds as a whole is a big matter, we should be glad enough to make a beginning by studying our own Pack, taught by one who knows his hounds. And who has studied our hounds if not their huntsman-master? He knows, *he* knows—that quiet and watchful man: he could tell us of the flat-catchers, the shirking and riotous hounds, of the criminals, the silent, the weak, and the slow.

He could tell us (as I haſten to add) of such hounds in a or any *neighbouring* Pack; or perhaps he could tell us of a very occasional such hound who was in our own Pack . . . before he took over the Maſtership. With the help of that unpleasant contraſt he could draw for us, the more readily, the pleasing picture of our Pack of to-day—and of last week. He could point the moral of last Wednesday's hunt and adorn the tale of yeſterday's gallop. Why did he leave them alone, on Thursday, when they loſt their fox? Why was he always at them, on Monday, when they killed? On what does he base his (low) opinion of *Ravager*? Why place such reliance on *Mermaid*?

It may be that a knowledge of these things would bring us no nearer to the tail and flank of a flying pack, on that downwind side: but, for those who ride there, such knowledge will certainly be a delightful thing. And it muſt be a very poor or poor-spirited horseman, remarkably ill-mounted, who has *never* been present at a check. At a check he should think hard as well as hold hard when hounds are puzzling it out. But thought requires something to bite on, and without that something your checked horseman will be as puzzled as any hound. That something is not to be learned from books: it is to be learned from quiet and watchful huntsmen who have time to talk—on Sunday. Then (long) after Church on Sunday—it need be only once in a season—let us all make our (invited) way to the Kennels. And if some non-hunting Pharisee should objeƈt to our taking the children, with decent, not to say luncheon, interval to the Kennels from the Church? Then let us scarify a Pharisee by telling him that, in New York, they have brought the Kennels *to* the Church. A "sports bay," they call it—a Sports Bay in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York: yet I cannot find that New York is any the worse for that.

But the English sportsman knows well enough what things be of good repute. I do not think that the English sportsman, by uncertain reference to St. Hubert and his ſtag, or challenging talk of sports bays,

requires to justify that once-a-season Kennel Sunday for "Subscribers and their Children." Justification enough will be there when a subscriber (if hardly his children) swings out, to the place of a man with a flying pack, exulting in a new-found knowledge, brought closer to an understanding of more of the secrets of Nature and some of the promptings of a Hound.

XI

TWO-AND-A-HALF STUDS

LET us make together one last, if partly loathsome, attempt to get at the cost of things. What, then, would you suppose to be the cost of maintaining a modest Stud of, let us say, two hunters and a family pony—for a year, which is to include the whole of a hunting season?

Whatever you may or may not suppose, the cost of keeping those two hunters and a pony is, in fact, £236 7s. 11d., and it is made up as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Groom's wages and insurance at £2 os. 9d. per week	105	19	0
A suit of clothes for him	7	15	11
Forage bills	92	10	9
Shoeing	8	17	1
Saddler's account	8	12	8
Veterinary Surgeon	12	12	6
	236	7	11

That is the cost, to-day, for one year; and if you tell me that another year might show quite another cost, I will reply that another year did, in fact, show an increase in cost—of £40 1s. 1d. That is to say, £6 7s. 11d. more for forage, £11 13s. more for shoeing, £12 4s. 2d. more for the saddler, and £9 16s. more for veterinary expenses.

Some part of this higher cost, as between one year and another, is explained by the fact that in the £236 year the two hunters and the pony were out at grass for some three of the summer months. In the £276 year the pony and one of the hunters were not turned out at all.

As to the higher veterinary expense, you cannot expect a horse, any more than a man, to keep his Doctor's bill to the same figure each year just for the sake of helping you with your sums. On the other hand, it may be that two such knowledgeable cocks, as are, doubtless, yourself and your groom, could have kept that veterinary expense below its comparatively high figure of £22 8s. 6d. Still, even you and your groom cannot know everything. I dare say that if you had saved the extra money on the veterinary swing-boat, you would have squandered it on a roundabout of some other stable expenditure, and one less comforting to your horse.

The saddlery increase of £12 odd is accounted for by the purchase of a fifteen-guinea saddle—a saving of £3 15s. having been effected on some other item or items (as you, with your clear head for figures, would really have been able to appreciate without me telling you). The increase from £9 to £20 for shoeing does, I will admit, puzzle me. I fear that some part of the £20 belongs to the previous year, and that we must strike an average and give £15 as the yearly cost of shoeing two horses and a pony. The only other explanation I can think of is that—enterprising Blacksmiths of to-day being something of wrought-iron artists—some little affair of door-knobs, a grating or a gate-catch, has somehow slipped into the shoeing account. It would take a lot of writing to prove to you (though the thing could be done) that the purchase of a wrought-iron gate for the garden may be part of the cost of keeping two hunters and a pony. I will ask you, instead, to accept my figure of £9 as having been the actual cost of shoeing for a year—and to understand that all my other figures are those of "actual cost." They are amounts paid for the past two years in the keeping of a Stud of two-and-a-half.

And so a striking of averages gives us the amount of £250 a year as being the normal cost of that Stud. By a further exercise of mathematical ability (and a good many dot-and-carry-ones) I could

show you that the cost of keeping *one* horse, and employing his groom, can scarcely be less than £180 a year. The fact that, if the groom is of a cheerful disposition and reasonably competent, an extra horse and pony can be added to his job at an extra cost of another £70 only between them—that is a fact which must not lead the novice among employers to extravagant conclusions. I did once know a groom who looked after eight horses and three ponies for six weeks without making any protest: without, that is to say, making any *effectual* protest. It was in pre-telephone days, and it so happened that this groom was unable to write. But he wasn't *dumb*, and what he might have said about it down the telephone, had such a thing then existed, I do not know. I can to some extent guess. For as a small boy it was for a long time one of my occupations of the holidays, to persuade this admirable man to repeat the account of his Augean labours during that nightmare six weeks—during which, by a chapter of accidents, the fact that he was in sole charge of eleven horses in the stable had been regrettably forgotten by an absent family. Bowdlerised for my youthful benefit as I now realise it to have been, that groom's account of his labours was so vitriolic a one that I should be glad to repeat it for the benefit of anybody who thinks that one man to two-horses-and-a-pony may be an insufficient allotment of labour.

But in that matter of Cost, do not, I beg you, suppose that *I* suppose that £250 or so a year covers the whole expense of your Stud of two-and-a-half. In our setting-out we have set down nothing for stabling or the keeping of your stables in repair. We have made no allowance for those horses out at grass. All your rubbers and dandy brushes, curry-combs, clipping-machines, and clothing—where do these, or half-a-hundred of other items, appear in our list? Nowhere. And a good thing too. No occupation is more daunting or dreadful than this occupation of totting up the cost of something pleasant which a man is doing in the full if suppressed conviction that he cannot afford to

do it. Let the novice take heart—provided, of course, that he can also take two hundred and fifty pounds. With two hundred and fifty pounds in his fist he shall keep those two horses and a pony on the fat of the land for a year. And if at the end of the year another two hundred and fifty pounds is not very readily forthcoming, then the experience gained by a novice may show him what I cannot show him—how he can do it for less.

And if the novice should take heart, it may be better that he who has for long been accustomed to keep two or more horses and ponies should not take up his pen at all, for to figure out the cost. If every man in the world kept two horses and a pony the world would be a better, if, in parts, a slightly congested, place. As it is, there are not so many men in the world keeping two horses and a pony that we can afford to lose, in England, many of those who do. For myself I cannot suppose that two hundred and fifty pounds of anybody else's money could be put to a better use than this. I look forward to the day when a list of Birthday Honours will contain the names of every man and woman who keeps two hunters (and a pony). In the meantime how pleasant is the assurance that, man and woman, they are riding about our countryside to-day in ever great numbers and in that wholesome, chivalrous tradition of a Knight and his Dame. For the rest, if we are to end a sordid chapter on a hard note of cash—who ever heard of Knighthood more cheaply purchased than for so beggarly-trivial a sum as is two hundred and fifty pounds of someone else's money? A truce, then, to all figuring and let a Knight and his Dame get mounted—and ride forth to buy a pony for the family.

XII

FRAGMENT

NOW which would be the horse he is lending me? Wish it was that chestnut. What was it he said? "Big, upstanding, brown horse, you can't mistake him, my groom's name is Cogg." How the devil are you to find a horse at a meet like this on a description like that? Hope it's not that rather common-looking monster over there.

Mister Pofferoo, sir?

Hell! So that's the one. It would be! *Yes, that's right.* Why the dickens can't anybody pronounce my name properly? I don't much like this horse. *Nice ride, is he?*

Nicest horse ever I rode, sir, almost. Of course, you want to leave his mouth alone.

Oh! This saddle's too far forward and this groom is—— *Get up, horse!*

Ah! You don't want to touch him there, sir! I'll put on the sandwich case after you're up, sir. And you don't want ever to touch him behind the saddle, sir.

Um.

And you want to look out for when he bucks, sir.

Seems to have his own ideas about what I want. All I know is, so far I don't much want to ride this horse. And these blasted leathers are different lengths. *These leathers are different lengths.*

No, sir. Oh, very good, sir. Two up, this side. That's got it.

And how am I to look out for when he bucks?

You can't, sir. But look out when he does it three times running. Very prevarious, 'e is. Light-hearted, as you might say.

And does he often buck three times running?
It's just according, sir.

Oh yes? That was rather good, the way I said *Oh yes* like that. Nonchalant. Better ride him about a bit and get his back warm. Never any use asking a groom questions. Anyhow, not a groom who can have a curb chain about three links too tight, as this is. *Good morning! Yes, I think it will be.* Now what the devil is that fellow's name? *Good morning! No, I'm afraid it won't be.* What's the use of talking about scent, anyway? What's the use of talking at all? Terrible lot of talk goes on at a meet. Talk and petrol fumes. Wonder if it's ever wise to ride other people's horses. What happens if you break his neck? Well, you hardly ever do.

Good morning, sir! If I can take my hat off to the Master, why the devil can't young Goope? Young Goope's worse than Old Goope. Uglier, too. And what does Johnnie Bassington want with that trailer horse-box? Only excuse for a trailer horse-box is if it lets you hunt an extra day a fortnight. Johnnie could hunt ten days a week for all he does on the days he does hunt. *Oh, good morning! Yes, isn't it? Oh dear. I always thought they got on so well together. Never liked him very much, though. Didn't you? But she looks very well on a horse? Sitting side-saddle: none o' your forked radishes.* That wasn't very clever: rides astride, herself. Can't think why I said it—nor why they do it.

Think I'll get off this road. Canter him down the field. *Aaaah! Get your great head up!* That was as near a buck as makes no matter. Two would have put me on his neck. If he generally does it in threes I shall spend most of the day in the air.

He certainly hangs on your hands. And that's a thing I hate. Get off and loosen this curb-chain. That's better, or ought to be. Otherwise he's not such a bad ride. Lots of room in front—powerful quarters too. I dare say it'll be all right. Look at that pony! Got away

with her already! And why not? Send a child out on a pony shaped like a beer barrel and then be surprised when the beer barrel gets away with her! And that other pony will hop it with that small boy as soon as hounds start running. Nice, narrow, high-couraged pony: but what's the use of that when your legs hardly reach below the saddle flaps? 'S cruelty.

At last. Here they come. Now will it be Hurley Osiers or Parton Holt? Hope it'll be the holt. Lord, I forgot to post that letter! Hope it'll be the holt. Osiers *not* a good place to get away from. Either those three big banked fences for a start or that very big post-and-rails. It *is* the Osiers. This horse certainly reaches at you. But I'm glad they didn't send him in a snaffle. Snaffles are for horses whose mouths and manners are perfection—or for horsemen with hands from hell. Can't hurt your horse with a snaffle. Can't hold him or help him, either.

Wish people would stand still. Master ought to have a microphone. Every Master ought to. Soon will, I dare say. *Hark!* No. Sounded like a holler too. Why do these writers write it holloa? Silly. I mean, call it holloa if you want to and if they ever did, but why write it what you don't call it and then—— *They've found!* Sit still. *Yes!* It'll have to be the post-and-rails. Half the field chasing off after old George. Quite right too. No sense in chasing after a fellow you don't mean to go on following.

Listen again. They're not away yet. Keep quiet. Everybody does. Everybody gossiping again. What do they find to *say*? Still, there's a lot of country business gets done and things settled out hunting. *That's the music!* Hell, these rails look bigger every time I see 'em. . . . Anyhow, he can jump. Felt his quarters touch my back. All wrong, that. Doesn't say much for my seat. Well, who (*get* your head up!) wants to say much for my seat? And, anyhow, I didn't job him in the mouth.

Balance—that's me! Lord, what a leap! Cleared it by feet. Balance and grip and hands, grip and hands and . . . *bal*-ance. Nearly copped it that time. 'Spity when you haven't got any grip.

This horse is getting away with me. This horse . . . is . . . certainly . . . getting *away* with me. Doesn't seem much use pulling at him. Sit still. Hope for the best. This next fence looks wonderful big. Simply colossal. Simply col——

XIII

GREATNESS

IT would be pleasant to be able to say with truth that in the "walking" of a foxhound pup there is no bother for anyone; one would wish to be able to declare that any old lady can at any time, with confidence and alacrity, dispense with her pug or "Peke"—and take up a ladylike burden of walking a puppy for the Hunt. To walk a pup is to do a great service for the Hunt—and to make some considerable saving of expense to that Hunt, when we consider how much of attention and exercising (as well as of food) a foxhound pup will require from the Hunt if he be *not* walked by public-spirited supporters.

But—"public-spirited"; that is something of a gizzard-sticking word when we get it, like that, with our puppy. "We must all do good to others—then what are the others to do?"—that is an old conundrum which keeps cropping up in these days, when the calls on our Public Spirit (if any) are numerous, as well as insistent. To a man or a woman who takes a pup or two to walk it will sometimes seem that there is nothing noticeably public about the spirit of the neighbours. A man may have to go some little distance to find a neighbour who, also, is walking a pup: but your own puppy may not have to stray very far before he finds one of your neighbours who objects to him. For a puppy is not a parcel—to be collected from the Kennels at your leisure and returned again next year. It may be that the damage which a lively pup will do is not so great as an old lady might fear; it may not even be quite so cataclysmic as your neighbours will lead you to suppose—when they gloomily inform you that "that

foxhound pup of yours" was "round here again to-day." But it can scarcely be that the presence of a foxhound pup in and around the house will make no difference at all to the house and the neighbourhood.

As to *that*, we may claim at once that the presence of the pup will give an air of distinction to your house—such as your silver-papered walls and furniture of sky-blue glass (or whatever be the decoration-madness of the hour) will miserably fail to achieve. Indeed, it can only be an exceptionally distinguished or very proud person who will dare to assert that the presence of a foxhound puppy or two will not improve the look of both his house and himself. Many a man of our countryside, *you* might think, would look better decorated with a foxhound puppy than he does with his knighthoods and such.

As to that damage question, neither we nor our neighbours must be petty about these things. One must take the large view of puppy walking and be at the same time a little blind to the immediate scene. When the immediate scene is one of a foxhound pup gallumping through the flower beds, or making a hurried, imprecation-hastened departure from the direction of the game-larder and other kitchenish places—those are times when a large and a long view will be a great help. The presence of a lively young foxhound or two *does* make a difference to your house. In an imperfect world neither you nor your neighbours will expect to find the difference an *entirely* favourable one.

And the fact is that a foxhound will never make an adequate substitute for the old lady's pug or "peke." The young pup is not a pet—often, he is not even a companion. About an old hound there is a nobility of attitude to Man and his world, which is at least a very restful thing with which to come in contact. There is a placid dignity and self-possession about an old hound, such as makes an old hound a pleasant, calm companion. In the eyes of an old hound there is a wisdom and trustfulness. An old hound can be your friend, and there will be happiness for both parties to that friendship.

But if a puppy wants your friendship, he doesn't know he wants it. He knows that in your house he wants your shoes or your cartridge bags and anything else that makes good chewing. And he wants the *run* of your house, so that he may go skidding over polished floors at his own sweet will, or come lumbering in to flop himself down wherever he feels like flopping. And if he appreciates, too, the outside of your house, he can do quite well without *you*. It will often have been exasperating to you to see how well he can do without you. When, missing that pup on your morning ride, you ride back a mile to find him—you will find him, more often than not, looking at you with extreme distaste from half a field away. You may flatter yourself you had lost him, but it is very much more likely that he had deliberately tried to lose you. When he finds that the companionship of that morning ride is to be resumed—well, you will be lucky if his attitude is anything more friendly than that of a polite resignation to the inevitable.

Yet none of that must count with us—or it must not count against taking a puppy to walk. It is true that a man (or his family) should be present each day if a puppy is to come to the house. A man cannot take a puppy to walk and then leave no one in attendance on the puppy. A man who lets foxhound puppies have the run of the place must, as it were, let himself with the place. There must be someone at hand to make obsequious apology to his own gardeners, to appeal to the hereditary sport-instinct of the cook, to pacify a neighbour, purple in the face. And his own reward for all this? Well, of course, it is nice for him to be called public-spirited at a subsequent puppy-judging. It is all the nicer when he is secretly satisfied that these be no empty words but an entirely inadequate recognition of what he has done for the Hunt. But perhaps it will be pleasantest of all for him to think of what he has done for the puppy. He has given him health and strength—all that was in his power to give. What the puppy

makes of that health and strength is no concern of the puppy's "walker"—whose advice as to general conduct, if he were able to convey it, would certainly be flouted by the pup. But what *will* the pup make of this gift of health and strength? Will he be riotous, a babbler, a cunning criminal, a dodger yet failing to dodge the draft, and going, by rapid and disreputable stages, the stag-hunting, *drag*-hunting ways of all such Disreputables? Never! As the Kennel "gates of learning" clank behind his charge, let every walker be assured that this, his puppy, shall be of the very elect. For nose, for pace, for drive and courage and constitution—what hound shall compare with this puppy of his walking in every hound-like quality? Then go up to the Gates of Learning with your foxhound puppy. Leave him at the Kennels, well assured that here is future Greatness going on four legs. And if Greatness shouldn't know you again when you meet him at the Meet? Well, if Greatness should refuse to come your way—eyeing you something distantly, as you seek to cajole a puppy to recognition of his walker—then you, too, may have a distant view. You may take your glasses—as those puppy-walking Cornish miners and others do take their field-glasses, going on foot to the hunt. You shall climb to a hill-top, and, with your eyes on Greatness and the pack, *then* you shall recognise your puppy and be glad that you have in some sort a share in Greatness.

Does it seem to you on that hill-top that one hound above all others excels in nose and pace and gameness and every hunting quality? Well, of course, if that *is* so it may be very bad for the pack: but if it only seems to you that this Greatness-puppy growing into a hound is a long way above the average of the pack, that will anyhow increase your pleasure in having had a share in his upbringing. When the Seasons pass and that Greatness grows a little slow and old—when you look for Greatness through your glasses and find it increasingly difficult to recognise your puppy—then go to the Kennels and look

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in the eyes of any old hound you may find there. If your puppy was full of ungainly mannerisms, your old hound has the grand and the courtly manner. There is truſtfulness in the eyes of any old hound—a gratitude to Man, from whom comes health and ſtrength, that a hound may fulfil his deſtiny. And truſtfulness goes deeper than that. A foxhound puppy will not be bothered with the trivialities of friendship such as satisfy pug or "peke": an old hound will not require of you that intimacy of friendship which is all that makes life worth living to the old spaniel dog. "We be two Spirits, thou and I," says the old hound to you. "My deſtiny of Earth is near fulfilment. Having truſt in your future deſtiny and mine, I salute you eye to eye."

XIV

"WHAT DOES HE PUT INTO IT?"

WHAT is to-day the attitude of a hunting-field Newcomer to the Master? To ask what the attitude *should* be is a waste of time. People who are young to Hunting don't want, any more than other young people, to be told what they or their attitude should be. What is more to the point, young people don't intend to *be* it—when they find the old and experienced being all the other things.

Of course, for a mere Newcomer to have an attitude to the Master would have sent our remoter ancestors all purple in the face. But then, in those remoter days, it was but rarely that even the old and experienced would publicly criticise a Master of Foxhounds, for every Newcomer to hear. Nowadays, all that is changed. It may be that there are still hunting countries on crossing the boundary of which a man will feel impelled to proceed on all fours, carrying his hat in his teeth. But it can scarcely be that, in England to-day, there are more than three of such countries. There may be three among the one hundred and eighty-three foxhunting countries of England to-day, in which the name of the Master is, in itself, enough to gag the old and experienced and to leave the Newcomer open-mouthed and goggle-eyed. There may be three, but I think that there are only two.

And so the Newcomer of to-day is free, and indeed encouraged, to have an attitude towards the Master. For that matter, cats have always been free to look at kings; but nowadays a cat may *scratch* a king—and find his feet of clay. That may not matter to the king, who if he is living on a clay soil had better be told about it: but it is very bad for the cat. It is bad for cats of both sexes. When cats of

both sexes go slinking and word-spitting around the hunting field, they are only being cattish: but if people fail to hunt a slinking cat out of the field, then the cat becomes a proud and scornful cat. It is *that* sort of cat which wants chasing out of the field to-day. That sort of cat has had too much encouragement or too little chasing. "Some," said the irascible Colonel to his assembled battalion, "some rule by fear and some by affection. I rule by fear—so *damn you all.*" Rule by fear is rightly seen to be out of date to-day, yet it is not every Master who can feel enough affection for his cats to persist in teaching them manners. The result is that the untaught cat fails to appreciate that he has got a Master—and the rawest Newcomer is encouraged to behave like an impudent cat.

But the Masters of Foxhounds remain: or if in some hunting countries they do not remain for long, they continue to replace each other. Then why is it that a Hunt which is unable to keep a Master for more than a season or so at a time—why is it that a Hunt which has just shot out one Master with every display of *gaucherie* and ingratitude is able to obtain another Master without the slightest difficulty? I fear the fact is that Masters of Hounds do not, nowadays, expect gratitude. When I say "I fear" (in that mawkish way) I do not mean that I have any doubt about it. I *know* that Masters of Hounds do not expect to be treated with ordinary decency. My fear is that the average Subscriber thinks it necessary to be critical of the Master, if he himself is not to be thought a Newcomer to the Sport. And the Master of to-day accepts a situation which his ancestors would have viewed with horror and oaths. Why?

And, again (since a one-word sentence looks all wrong at the end of a paragraph like that)—why? "What does *She* get out of it?" A loyal People will hardly like, even at this distance of time, to be reminded of that scurrilous, What-does-she-get-out-of-it pamphlet which an insolent (and English) dog wrote about his Queen. But at

least that insolent dog was able to show, as he thought, that what She got out of it was a very large income. Who can show a Newcomer that a Master of Foxhounds gets anything at all out of being a Master? When cats go slinking round the Field a Newcomer must be prepared to hear it said that a Master is "living out of the Hunt." That is sometimes true in the sense that he is living out of the country—the Hunts concerned having exhausted the supply, the patience or the money of possible Masters within their own boundaries. But where those words are used they are meant to be understood literally. A Newcomer, told that the Master is "living out of the Hunt," is not meant to understand that the Master is away during the summer and not always there in the season: he is meant to understand that the Master is paying for his breakfast and his sons' education and his box of cigars (if any)—all out of his guaranteed subscription. A Newcomer who can't quite swallow *that* may be led to believe at the least that the Master is getting his own hunting—his horses and their keep and his fun—for nothing. Well, the Newcomer may think that if the Master is capable of getting any fun out of hunting when people talk like that, he is entitled to all the fun he gets. But if the Subscribers think that the Master is getting and keeping his horses for nothing, why, even a Newcomer may think that the Subscribers had better say so—*to the Master*, in committee, and not only to each other and to Newcomers.

Masters of to-day do not expect gratitude. That is not to say that they wouldn't *like* it, or that any genuine contribution, however small, wouldn't be thankfully received. Indeed, the Newcomer will sometimes see the Master receiving a very small contribution with, on his side, hearty thanks and a quite heartrending gratitude. For while the Master seldom gets any thanks while he is being Master, there does come—just before he moves on to another Hunt—there *does* run through the Subscribers a sort of shiver of remorse at their treatment

of the man. To the (moderate) credit of human nature I think that the shiver is one of remorse—that it doesn't arise merely from a goose-flesh feeling that, after all, they may not be able to replace him or have only just done so with a squeak.

For if Newcomers and non-hunting outsiders will sometimes genuinely wonder what a Master of Foxhounds does "get out of it" to-day—all hunting people know that that is not the question. The question is, What does he put into it? If the question were always put that way round, Newcomers and everybody else would have to think twice and for a whole season before they spoke about the Master at all. For the amount which a successful Master must "put into it" is more than most of his critics have got. There are Masters of Hounds who get most of their happiness and nearly all their pleasure out of Foxhunting, but the great majority of Masters have to put into it an active sense of duty and a lively sense of humour if what they themselves are to get out of it is to be anything more than disappointment.

Yet there will be something missing in a Mastership carried on only from a sense of duty—and that something is a something essential to good Hunting. As to that other sense—of humour—that is a thing which, with the best will in the world, neither a Master nor anyone else can share with his fellow-men. When an active sense of duty has done rather more than the Hunt Committee to persuade a Master to carry on for another Season—then a lively sense of humour may enable the Master to stomach the Committee's carryings-on during that other Season. But if a Master of Hounds expects the Committee to see or share the joke with him, he will add the frost of their irritated displeasure to the fog of his own amiable train of thought. In a season of frost and fog his hunting of those hounds will come to a dismal end.

The fact is that the requirements of Mastership have shared in the general expansion which involves all social service of to-day. The Mastership of a Hunt was always a social service—but, like all social

service, it used to be a mighty sight more comfortable service to belong to than it is to-day. Any Newcomer and any noodle can see that to-day—and no matter in what type or grade of Hunt—the Master has to spend half his time in getting to know and understand the members of his Hunt, and the other half in showing them Sport. That is a hard fate for a Master whose remoter ancestors only had to show Sport—and could spend the rest of their time in damning their neighbours and drinking themselves under the table. But if the life of a good Master is a hard one, it is no harder than the life of a good Parson or Member of Parliament. They, too, are men whose reward (if any) is intangible; whose chief work is done outside their place of business and after business hours; for whom the measure of their success will be the extent to which they are able to understand the needs of those they serve and to *want* to supply those needs. So Parson and Master and Member of to-day, hunting the same country, will no doubt get what comfort they can from that.

In one other and important respect the Mastership of Hounds has shared in the general expansion. It is often and sourly said that to-day we have no great men, and the majority of hunting people will assure you that to-day we have no great Masters. There can be few Hunts so poor in tradition to-day that their Members will be unable to make odious comparison between some legendary Great One among their Masters and their shortcoming Master of to-day. Possibly the Legendary Great would be able to cope with the state of things existing to-day. All we can say definitely is that they didn't have to. And having said that, we may register a belief that great men and Masters are only *not* as many as formerly because they are many *more* than formerly. The standard of greatness has at least been maintained and probably raised; the demand for greatness has increased, and the supply keeps nearly level with the demand.

We may ignore, for the moment, that half of a Master's work

which is done in his place of business and consists in showing Sport. The Master's place of business is the hunting field, and if the Master fails to show Sport out hunting no amount of out-of-hours work will compensate for *that*. But the trouble is that many a Master, to-day, can continue to show Sport throughout the Season and be pronounced a failure at the end of it. When that occurs it will be because he has been unable to do his out-of-hours work.

It is out-of-hours and, most of all, the out-of-*season* work on which the success of a Mastership depends. During the Season a Master can do wonders by finding or making time for giving personal attention to wire and damage and poultry problems. Here he is on doubly difficult ground, for he can't possibly give his personal attention to *all* the problems of wire and damage and poultry. By butting-in on an odd problem or two, he possibly discourages, and certainly infuriates, the Secretary or the Sub-Committee appointed for the job. And yet—when wire has been cut, when seeds have been ridden, when a fox has taken chickens—what can be more soothing and satisfactory to the loser by this damage than to have the Master himself arriving to put matters right. And many Masters make (an occasional) practice of doing this. It is true that they don't always succeed in putting matters right. A Master may arrive with a fifty-shilling hunting-gate and posts crammed into the back of the car (with a view to mending a cut-wire gap in a manner not unprofitable to the Hunt)—and then find that a cheque for chickens was what the Hunt had been asked to send. But that comes of butting-in, and as it isn't all that comes of butting-in it doesn't really matter in the end. It may be that the hunting-gate and posts will eventually be rejected with oaths by the man for whom they were really intended: but it may also be that the chicken-loser will politely return the cheque when it comes, just because the Master took the trouble to come. Such things are the windfalls of courtesy, and if true courtesy won't count upon windfalls,

a proper appreciation of the business side of hunting requires that many such payments be made in a businesslike way in the course of a Season. It is neither right nor is it enough that the payment should be offered in a "no real sportsman would take the money" spirit.

That is by the way, although, by the way in which such payments are made much will be lost or gained for Foxhunting in any hunting country. That is what the mere Business Man and the inexperienced Newcomer fail to appreciate. The Business Man thinks it will be enough—and the Newcomer thinks it *should* be enough—for the farmer whose wheat has been galloped to death to receive a fattish cheque in exchange. The rest of the Hunt are aware that where the Master himself is unknown to the farmers and to any who stand to lose by Foxhunting, a warning-off order is, as likely as not, to arrive in the envelope which brings the receipt for the Hunt's cheque. The Master of to-day must be *known* by those who stand to lose by Foxhunting, and he must be known to be sympathetic. If it was ever enough for the Master to be known only as a distinguished and unapproachable individual, that can only have been in the days of those legendary Great Ones.

Then, when is the Master to become known? On a hunting day he may or may not be "distinguished," but he is certainly and necessarily unapproachable. It is only on non-hunting days of a week that he can stop to listen for long to complaints and bothers and troubles. And that will not be enough. Your man of Big Business may be able to settle a bother by scooting off in a sleeping-car to deliver an hour's harangue at the Works. But if the Master rolls off in his Royce or rattles around in—in whatever make of car he can afford—this, in itself, will not be enough. For it is the Out-of-Season hunting which the Master does (or doesn't) upon which the successful continuation of a Mastership and of Foxhunting itself will depend. If, in the summer, a Master will hound himself out to attend this horse

show and that gymkhana; if he is seen and heard on Agricultural occasions of all sorts and at dinners and dances as well; if he will dig himself out to visit people of all ways of living within his hunting boundaries—and get to understand their hopes and fears and outlook —then, and only then, a Master of Hounds, getting to know people, will come to be trusted by them.

It is in that mutual interchange of trust and affection that a Master must chiefly deal. True, as a purchaser, he and his Hunt can do a solid hay and corn business with Farmers throughout their country: but the Hunt and its Members can't do business with *all* the farmers and they can't do any business at all with those who farm in the smallest way and have most to lose by Foxhunting. That is a situation puzzling enough to bother the mere man of Business, however Big—when a Master has to be trusted, having nothing to buy or sell.

As to how they do it, that is the secret of those Masters who succeed in doing that business. But there is nothing sinister about it. Any Newcomer who thinks he can show Sport on hunting days may cheerfully and confidently apply for the job of a Master—if he is willing to take the trouble to show an informed sympathy with his fellow men and women. Only—let us, urgently if pompously, warn the Newcomer: the sympathy must be informed and it must be genuine. To put the problem at its simplest, it is of no use for the Master to sympathise with *X* at the horse show when he is mixing him up with *Y*, whom he met at last week's gymkhana. It is useless, too, for a Master, with superficial *bonhomie*, to go about the country acting the Little Ray of Sunshine. The Master must *be* a ray of sunshine—and pretty hot stuff at that—if he is to penetrate the heads and hearts of all of us ordinary folk.

And so the question is, *What does he put into it?* Half-stunned by the magnitude of that question, a Newcomer will easily be forgiven (and might almost be applauded) if his attitude to the Master be one of a respectful silence, lasting for several seasons.

XV

HOW LONG?

"I GIVE it twenty years," a man will say to you, of Foxhunting or of anything else the passing of which he himself would regret, but by the passing of which he does not expect, himself, to be personally inconvenienced. "It will last my time," he will declare, with a ghoulish complacency; or "it won't come in my time," he will announce, with ill-concealed satisfaction, as he steps safely out of his picture of an unattractive future, so that you may prepare to meet that Future without his assistance.

So far as Foxhunting is concerned, I do not think that we do well to spend our time in listening to Jeremiah Prophets. When Jeremiah is a very old gentleman an attitude of semi-respectful silence is perhaps a decent attitude. When Jeremiah has succeeded in riding to nearly the end of a long run of life—when the big fence of which he can't see the other side is all that Jeremiah has yet to negotiate—then we must not ourselves be too querulous if Jeremiah P. expresses a querulous opinion that we shall soon be getting into the trouble which he has managed to avoid. But there is no need to repeat what Jeremiah has said in his haste or quavered in his senility: for people can mesmerise themselves with Jeremiah talk, and thereby decrease their own power of getting on with the job. "Yes, sir—he was a great old gentleman, the Old Colonel. I remember him saying to me (twenty years ago it must have been) that Foxhuntin' would be all over within the next twenty years. 'James,' he says, 'mark my words,' he says, 'in twenty years' time there'll be no more Foxhuntin'.'" "But," I objected, "that *was* twenty years ago. And here, in one of the most difficult parts of England, the country is more fully covered, and by more

Hunts, than ever before in hunting history. More people hunting, more money spent, a more intelligent interest taken than ever be——" "Yes," he said, shaking his head, "twenty years the Colonel give it: and that was twenty years ago: and I'm glad he's not here to see the end."

Well, what can you do with people like that? Between Elizabeth's day and our own the end of Hunting has been prophesied almost as often as the end of the world. It may be true that Queen Elizabeth hunted three days a week at the age of seventy-seven. It is certainly true that people are hunting more than three days a week to-day. The fact is that between Elizabeth's day and our own the world, as any single generation has known it, has ended many a time. A more comfortable fact is that at each rebirth, the life of England growing fuller and better, this Foxhunting has remained a part of English life.

And why not? After all, what besides Frost and the end of a Season is to put a stop to Hunting? Well, no one in a book like this asks a question like that unless he thinks he knows the answer or some of the answers. What is to stop Hunting is the fact that it is

Expensive
Cruel
Damage doing
Dangerous

and that it has to compete with other Sports and interests and requires a lot of space in a crowded England. What, then, is to keep Hunting going? Why, the very fact that, in addition to being in healthy competition with other Sports and interests and in addition to taking its followers out of the crowds and into space—it is

Expensive
Cruel
Damage doing
Dangerous.

This may seem a hard saying (although it is more likely, as you will have remarked, to be called a silly one). Yet it is not so silly as all *that*. The Expense and the Danger are easily seen to be advantages. If the thrills, the attractions, and the character-buildings of the hunting field are cheap at any price, the cost of them remains a serious consideration to a man, on whatever scale of magnificence or modesty that man may hunt. Having paid for their fun, those men (and women) will see that they get it. And it may not be altogether to the bad that a certain commercialisation of Foxhunting results in followers of the Sport insisting on being shown sport for their money.

And the Dangers of Foxhunting, no less than the Expense, do help to keep Foxhunting alive and flourishing. If to hunt the fox seemed no more dangerous than to stop at home, a large proportion of those who hunt, to-day—would stop at home. It is possible that the dangers of Foxhunting might, at some future date, cause English men and women to give up Foxhunting. It is possible—but not probable: the probability is that the freedom to do, in pleasant surroundings, something decently dangerous in a world of Safety First will continue, indefinitely, to be an attraction. I am not saying that Foxhunting is in fact and on the statistics a very dangerous pursuit: and I am certainly not denying that "safety first," for self and others, is essential to the efficient running of the world to-day: I am only insisting that no one who goes out Hunting can be sure that he will come home safe and sound—and that, while everyone would like to be sound, not all of those who can see the sense of Safety First want always to be safe.

So much for Expense and Danger. But the fact that Hunting does damage is also a thing which helps to ensure its continuance. Hunting does no damage which cannot be paid for. The number of people who can afford *not* to be paid for the damage done to them grows fewer every Season. More and more surely will a Hunt be compelled to pay

for the damage it does—and most rightly compelled, for the character of neither a Hunt nor its followers is improved by being allowed to go scot free. The result will be (and already is being) that, on the one side, less of avoidable, expensive damage is being done; on the other side, the unavoidable damage is being paid for. A businesslike necessity for checking both the debit and the credit side of that account will be a permanent stimulant to Foxhunting itself.

All that (as you see) is very simple and straightforward. To have set down the "Cruelty" of Foxhunting as one of the factors ensuring its continuance is going to need rather more careful explanation. In the first place, it is well established (and none but the self-righteous, the frothing, and the screaming fanatic now denies it):

1. That some foxes regard being hunted as an extremely exhilarating experience.

2. That the majority of foxes don't get hunted for more than a few minutes in the whole course of their lives.

3. That a still greater majority of foxes wouldn't *have* a life but for hunting.

4. That the most comfortable fox-life is that lived in a hunting country.

But a Cruelty of Hunting remains. It is nearly as cruel to hunt the fox as it is to make me earn my living. The chief difference is that the world which invites me to earn my living doesn't often see me doing it. I do not mean that the world has the misery and mortification of seeing me *failing* to earn my living (that is a misery reserved for the small, faithful band of my creditors). I mean that the cruel world sees as little of me earning my living as the average field sees of the hunted fox. It is my firm opinion that, taking the season throughout, not a fifth of the mounted followers of a Hunt have ever seen the fox except in covert or when just leaving covert (and a good proportion of

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that fifth has not even seen him there). Further, that not a tenth of the followers have ever seen the hunted fox in his hour of distress. Finally, that not a twentieth of them, in all the season, has seen a fox killed.

That being so—what an absurdity, what an imbecility it is to talk of any brutalising influence of Foxhunting. Those who do see the hunted fox, and see him killed, are in the very circumstances of the case not *open* to any brutalising influence which may be lurking about. Their every sense is fully occupied with the riding necessities of the moment. They may be exultingly sailing along in the poetry of motion which goes with a free-striding, clear-leaping hunter: they are rather more likely to be trying to steady a brute of a horse who catches hold, or trying to keep a tired one on his legs. If a brutality of hunting makes any appeal to them, it is an appeal which, being occupied, they don't hear—and if unoccupied, they wouldn't listen to.

And yet a Cruelty of Hunting remains—a cruelty inseparable from the world as we know it, a world in which the very fact of my being alive will often seem a brutal fact to some socialistic someone, and in which the annoyance of anti-sport fanatics being in existence is frequently a serious irritation to me.

Then this Cruelty of Foxhunting is certainly a sign that Foxhunting will continue in England as long as "the world as we know it" lasts. It fits in with this world as we know it. And if we are to talk of fitness, what fitter occupation can you name for a man, of all the occupations open to him to-day, than this most searching occupation which is hunting of the fox? What else could you put in its place—in the world of England, as we know it to-day? Do not, I beg you, still further irritate me by any foolish replies to that question, nor shock me by your ribald suggestions. When this world-as-we-know-it next ends, that will be time enough to be finding alternatives to Foxhunting. And from what I have seen of him, I have a notion that when new

occupations are given out at that end of the world—the Foxhunter, and not the Fanatic, will be trusted with the bigger job.

We may say, then, that every serious thing which seems to threaten the existence of Foxhunting in England to-day is, on balance, a thing which favours its continued existence. That will hold good so long as the things which lie at the back of Foxhunting continue to be healthy things. And if you find it tiresome to be searching the motives of self and others in a simple, straightforward business of English Foxhunting? If you would cut out all talk of weighings and balancings? Well, that, too, you may do, I think—and do it with a clear conscience. In hunting the fox, with all the ramifications of that Hunting of to-day, you may put body and brain to as full a test as any that can be devised for you. And if you feel there is something more to you than a healthy body and a lively brain? Well, give it a chance in the open air of England—put your galloping questions to the winds, ask them in the silence of the woodlands. How long to the end of Foxhunting and to the end of England as we know it? There are answers in the open air of England—for spirits that are troubled and tired, or for hearts that are laughing and gay.

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